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THE

CAUSES AND TREATMENT

OF

LATERAL CURVATURE OF THE SPINE.

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THE

CAUSES AND TREATMENT

OF

LATERAL CURVATURE OF THE SPINE.

By RICHARD BARWELL, F.R.C.S.,

SURGEON TO AND LECTURER ON ANATOMY AT THE CHARING CROSS HOSPITAL.

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PREFACE.

ALTHOUGH it be unadvisable that an author should in a preface argue the necessity of reading his book, he may nevertheless be permitted to state why it has been written. In the present plethora of medical literature no one should publish unless he has something to say which he believes to be more than a mere repetition of what has been said in another form,—something which he believes to be both new and useful. The reason of my having such faith in the ensuing pages may be thus stated.

Having failed to find in books a satisfactory theory of those conditions which produce lateral curvature, it naturally appeared that in all the works, English and continental, which I studied, and whose name is legion, there was something defective, for they gave, to my thinking, no explanation of certain

essential peculiarities of that deformity. Endeavouring to carry further their line of reasoning, the same gap or the same impassable barrier presented itself. It then appeared that, to carry out my desire, I must work for myself. To do this I first examined a great many normal backs under different conditions, measuring and calculating different movements and varying postures, both at rest and in exercise. The results of about twenty months of this labour are given in a few lines of the ensuing pages; at the same time, dissections and examinations of normal and morbid specimens, as far as my opportunities would permit, were carried on. Having completed these studies, I turned to living spinal curvatures, and investigated their condition with the insight which my studies of the norm had afforded. This work also occupied a considerable period, during which time all theorizing was avoided until a large mass of facts were collected, until these facts presented me with a causation which I could trust, and until experience led me to a treatment calculated to remedy its effects. Although, then, a great

deal has been written upon the subject of lateral curvature of the spine, I yet hold myself justified in adding another work to the list; because the views which I have been led to form account for those essential characteristics which have been hitherto left unexplained, and because the treatment which I advocate is certainly less irksome, and will, I firmly believe, be found by others, as by myself, more efficacious than that which has hitherto been pursued.

It only remains for me to say that the substance, or, as it may be called, a summary, of the ensuing pages, appeared in 'The Lancet' during the latter end of the last and the beginning of the present year. Perhaps may be partly due to that form of publication a certain mode of arrangement which, though not quite logical or orderly, will, I think, conduce to the more easy comprehension of the doctrine which I desire to teach.

RICHARD BARWELL.

32, *George Street, Hanover Square,*
26th May, 1868.

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ON LATERAL CURVATURE OF THE SPINE.

CHAPTER I.

THE NORMAL SPINE.

THE treatises which I have published on Diseases of Joints, and on Clubfoot, &c., will probably lead those of my readers who are acquainted with their contents, to expect in the ensuing pages a somewhat analogous mode of dealing with deformities of the trunk. This, I believe, will be found to be the case, not only in my endeavours to assign the malady to its real cause, but also in the *direct* method of treatment advocated. It may be permitted me to recall the fact, that in my writings on the subjects first named I have insisted on the necessity of going beyond the mere forcing of immobile parts into a position, which they must either retain, with permanent immobility or abrogate with resumption of motion—that

I have especially advocated treatment during the continuance of functional movement in such manner as to prevent destruction of joint structures, more especially the fatty fibrous degeneration of muscle so certain to attack those organs while retained in forced repose—and that in doing this it has been my task to point out some muscular functions and actions hitherto overlooked or insufficiently considered; but upon which the persistence of the malady nevertheless depends.

Cotemporarily with my investigations on joints and limbs, I began to study English and Continental works on the spine; and soon became involved in a haze of difficulties and a fog of contradictions—since of all the irreconcileable theories on the causes of lateral curvature, not a single one of them, nor all put together, account for the peculiarities of the disease.* These peculiarities are so constant and so remarkable as to in-

* Of course we must here except the curvature of rachitic origin, and those resulting from internal inflammations. I am speaking only of lateral curvature as a primary disease.

spire a true and instinctive feeling, that if they be left unexplained the disease itself is not understood. At the risk of forestalling points that must be examined hereafter, it will be necessary to mention the three most important characteristics of lateral curvature, and to contrast them with the explanations hitherto given. These are torsion of vertebræ,* predominance of dorsal curvature to one and the same side, and tendency to affect chiefly almost exclusively the female sex, and among these hardly any but women of Europe and the United States — especially of the Northern States. It would make this work utterly unreadable to mention all the theories that have been formed to account for these conditions; but it may be possible to do them full justice, without boring the reader, by classifying them into spastic contraction, debility and paralysis of spinal muscles, paralysis of respi-

* That is to say, each aberrant vertebra is twisted horizontally, so that the anterior surface of its body looks to the convexity, the tips of its spinous processes to the concavity of the curve. The degree of curvature corresponding accurately with the amount of torsion.

ratory muscles, overaction of the right arm, uneven distribution of the weight of the trunk, the weight of the heart hanging on the dorsal, that of the liver on the lumbar spine—disease and deformation of vertebræ and of intervertebral substance.* Now the difficulty with all these is as follows:—they none of them account, or indeed attempt to account, for rotation. If any one of these theories, except the over-action of right arm or weighting by heart and liver, were correct, the dorsal curvature must of necessity be as frequently to the left as to the right. The theory of over-use of the right arm, even were it for a moment tenable, should make the affection more usual in men than in women. The different weighting of the column by liver and heart should, if it were the efficient cause, render lateral curvature a constant and usual condition, equally common in both sexes. Thus, as we examine each and every of these theories, we

* I believe every theory will be found to range itself within one or the other of these classes—overweight of head being accepted as equal to debility, —Lack of nutrition as equivalent to disease.

find one or more of the characteristics in the disease unexplained; and as these points are not accidents, but essentials, the disease as a whole is not elucidated.

I believe that, in the course of the ensuing pages, I shall be able to give a satisfactory explanation of this perplexed subject, and to show how, upon a correct pathology, a more efficacious and less irksome or injurious treatment is to be adopted than the present prevalent method of screwing the spine into iron splints. To do this fairly we must take up the subject from early physiology, since by that means alone can we determine what forces act, and how they act on the vertebral column.

The bodies of the twenty-four bones composing the spine are placed alternately with intervertebral ligaments, so as to form a continuous column, which, lying within the abdomen, within the chest, and behind the gullet, tapers with slight modifications from below upwards to the point upon which the head is pivoted. The vertebræ, separated from each other in front by the remarkably

elastic intervertebral ligament, only touch at the back of the spinal canal by the small facets on the articular processes, one on each side. Each bone, therefore, rests upon its fellow by a tripod, between the feet of which lies the axis of motion, and where the vertebral canal perforates the bone. Movement at the articular surfaces takes place by the gliding action common to these and all arthrodial joints; the movement between the bodies is produced by compression, stretching, or twisting of the intervertebral substance which is thick enough to suffer these alterations to a very great extent, and elastic enough to recover them completely.

Now the spine of the infant is intrinsically straight in all directions; while so very young as to be kept always recumbent, the back perfectly devoid of any inherent bend, merely follows the curves of the surface upon which the child lies. The pelvis is nearly horizontal, *i. e.* the brim of the true pelvis projects little more than a right angle from the lumbar spine. When the infant sits up on the nurse's arm the back bends in one single anterior

posterior curve, concavity to the front, the pelvis maintaining the same relative position.

When, however, the child begins to walk, a change takes place in all these postures. The thighs must take a new position, and lie in a line parallel with the body's axis. In doing this they drag on all the muscles passing from the anterior part of the os innominatum to the femur—on the iliacus, rectus, pectineus, and others; the pelvis, yielding to these forces, must necessarily receive a downward slope, and the sacrum must project backwards. The psoas, made tense by the same force, draws the loins forward, while the mass of lumbar muscles enforces that bend of the lumbar region necessary to compensate for the pelvic obliquity, and to preserve the body in equilibrio. It seems at first sight well to say that the dorsal bend is produced by the necessity of balance; but it will, on consideration, be seen that there must be muscular force to place the passive bones in the position which permits balance. This force is supplied by the abdominal muscles, which passing from the pelvis to the walls of the chest, are rendered

tense by the new posture of the former and descent of the pubic bones above described. On the front of the dorsal spine are no muscles,—for if any were so placed, their action through the vertebræ upon such long levers as the ribs would destroy that regularity of movement necessary for healthy breathing. Therefore each pair of ribs is not moved by muscles acting on the fore part of the spine: on the contrary, nearly all motion of that portion of the column is confided to muscles attached to the ribs.

The flexion backward of the cervical spine, also necessary for balance, is produced by the tension, employed for keeping the head erect, of those muscles which are attached to the occiput, as well as of those attached to the vertebræ themselves. I must here make an observation on the position of the head in man, and the small size of the ligamentum nuchæ, which is especially placed in animals to economise muscular power. Although the weight of the head is in man considerably forward, yet very little muscular power is required to keep it upright. The disposition

of the upper part of the trapezius muscle, running from occiput to acromion, is such that a small part of the weight of the shoulders is quite sufficient to counterbalance the forward tendency of the head; the muscle is not fatigued thereby, since no contraction, further than mere tonic tension, is necessary to permit the weight of the one part to act on the gravity of the other.

When the adult or adolescent stands erect, with the weight evenly distributed between the two feet, the antero-posterior curves of the spine are three—cervical, dorsal, and lumbar, which alternate in direction; they may be thus expressed:—

CERVICAL—convex in front, 28 degrees of a circle of $6\frac{5}{8}$ radius, begins at the odontoid process, and ends at middle of 2nd dorsal vertebræ.

DORSAL—convex behind, 42 degrees of a circle of $12\frac{2}{8}$ radius, begins at 2nd dorsal, ends lower edge of 11th dorsal.

LUMBAR—convex in front, 80 degrees of a circle of $5\frac{3}{8}$ radius, begins middle last dorsal, ends lower edge last lumbar.

The chords of these arcs lie in one continuous line, which is the perpendicular of the crooked column; or to put it in other words, a perpendicular drawn from the tip of the odontoid process impinges on the vertebræ above-named, and forms the chords of the vertebral curves. This line, traced onwards beyond the lumbar vertebræ, falls at right angles on the centre of a line drawn from the middle of one acetabulum across the pelvis to the other. Thus the weight of the body falls upon the strong transverse arch formed by the thick ilio-pectineal line, and thence is transferred to another transverse arch, constructed by the necks of the thigh bones.

A considerable portion of the lateral springiness of the trunk is produced by these transverse arches: one buttress can be raised from the solid ground, and slung as it were upon resilient muscular power.

The above-mentioned incurvation of the spine has generally been considered and described as an essential characteristic of the column; but this is far from being the case; it is simply a condition forced upon the bones by the

human erect posture, and is essentially one of effort. This is proved by the congenital form of the spine, which is straight, by the fact that in lying down to sleep—even in sitting at ease—these curves, especially the lumbar, and to a great extent the cervical, are obliterated, and the column assumes simply one curve (concavity in front) from the last lumbar to about the fourth cervical vertebra. I cannot but think that the brothers Weber were, in their estimates of the dimensions of vertebræ, misled by their ideas of what ought to be the case, rather than guided by accurate measurement. They assert that the bodies of vertebræ vary in such wise (to put the matter shortly), that they are in all cases thicker on the convex part of the curve. Herr Hirschfeld, of Prague, a most accurate observer, could find no such variation; nor have I, in my measurements of a great many spines, been able to discover such differences as the Berlin anatomists have described.*

* It appears to me that the great elaboration and abstruse appearance in calculation of arcs and sines have caused this learned work ('Die menschliche

Again, if the vertebræ did really vary thus in thickness, the spine would maintain those curves during recumbency, and the infantile column would be bent. Moreover, the spine when erect would lose that mechanism of exquisitely counterbalanced springs which I am about to describe.

When the recumbent or sitting individual, whose spine, either nearly straight or forming a slight long bend, rises to his feet, the column changes its form in the manner described, and certain connecting structures are compressed or stretched. Let us first take those connected only with the bodies of the vertebræ—viz., intervertebral substance, anterior and posterior ligament. Imagine first the bones and the interposed substance piled one above the other, forming a straight line, with the ligaments in front and behind equally tense. Now bend the column for-

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Gehwerkzeuge') to be accepted with too little examination. I have, in another publication ('A Treatise on Diseases of the Joints'), shown that the great power which these authors attribute to a supposed articular vacuum is quite unfounded.

wards: the front of the intervertebral substance becomes compressed, the anterior ligament relaxed; while at the back the intervertebral substance is thickened, and the posterior ligament stretched: thus, in both back and front aspects of the column, there is attempt to restore the straight condition. But, besides these, we must consider the parts connected with the processes, which, especially those attached to the arches, are extremely elastic, and so arranged that they constantly, by their retractile power, tend to draw the back parts of each bone nearer together—*i. e.*, to make the spine concave posteriorly. Thus they are, at the loins and neck, at ease in the erect posture; the posterior muscles are there extremely strong: in the back they are tense, and always endeavouring to obliterate the dorsal curve, and in that part the muscles behind the column are comparatively very weak. Let us consider these conditions, first, in extremes: suppose the individual stoop or bend the trunk forcibly in any direction; there are always on the convex side ligaments stretched, on the con-

cave substance compressed, both endeavouring to restore the straight line. Next, suppose the individual, seated as man usually sits, with the lumbar curve obliterated, the dorsal one nearly so; imagine him starting up, and the spine assuming its curves—that is to say, all these ligamentous aids to motion, all these alternations of tenseness, are called into play; the spine becomes a spring, or a series of springs, which sets itself, or, rather, which set each other, allowing the brain to ride as in a well-hung carriage, and giving to the figure, expectant or in motion, that lithe activity which could never have been produced if the bones were a series of wedges such as the Webers describe.

Finding, then, that the normal antero-posterior bends do not result from the form of the bones, but are superinduced upon the previously straight spine simply by muscular force, I wished to determine, firstly, the amount of influence such muscles exercise, or, in other words, the degree of mobility, which the spine, under ordinary circumstances, possesses; secondly, the particular muscles pro-

ducing the movements in question; thirdly, the mode in which the usual movements of the body or limbs affected the spinal column.

In order to determine the capability of rotation in persons unaccustomed to gymnastic performances, I contrived a means of attaching a light upright rod to the upper end of the sternum and chest in such-wise that it should be quite uninfluenced by any movement of the shoulders; but should only and accurately follow the movement of the sternum from side to side. The upper end of the rod was, by jointed attachments, placed in communication with a dial-index. The person to be examined is seated on a chair, the pelvis well fixed, and, for greater security, the knees grasp between them a wooden pillar or bulkhead, so that all twist of the pelvis is impossible. This instrument then will exactly indicate the amount of rotation of the loins and back, the neck not being included. A very general amount of this rotation is between 30° and 40° to either side. Occasionally one comes across persons who can only turn 25° each way, but it is more usual to meet with those whose power

exceeds 50°. I myself can turn 56°. One of my subjects, seventeen years old, could turn 62° to each side — that is, more than one-third of the circle.

If we assume that the power of rotation is equally apportioned between the first dorsal and fourth lumbar vertebra (the last has no power of rotation, in all probability), it would be distributed amongst sixteen bones--that is, each would revolve upon the other, 7° 75′.*

I tried also to measure the lateral curve which the spine without absolute effort could assume, but found it impossible to do so on the body itself. I therefore had photographs taken of a few people, chosen not from those whose spines were very flexible, but from those whom it was most convenient to photograph. One of these persons, a woman aged thirty-two, placed with the left shoulder against the wall,

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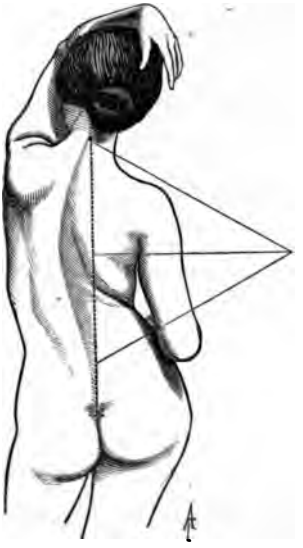
* I have found that authors mention different parts of the spine as enjoying most freedom of rotation, their deductions being drawn from their ideas of the limiting powers of the articulating processes. My belief, founded on many observations on the living, is that the freedom of movement is pretty evenly distributed.

was directed to bend the spine to the right as much as she could without strain. On the photograph of this position the transverse axis of the pelvis was drawn, and a line at right angles to it marks the straight position of the spine: the curve from the top of the sacrum to the vertebra prominens was then measured;



its length was 13·5 lines; the radial distance (we will suppose the curve circular) amounted to twelve lines. On the body of the patient,

the length of the spine itself was eighteen inches, therefore the radius of curve measured sixteen inches. The dorsal and lumbar spine, then, in ordinary individuals, and without exertion, can bend laterally in a curve whose radial distance is eight-ninths of its own length. The curve, however, is not quite circular; the greatest amount of bend takes place between the seventh and tenth dorsal vertebræ.

I also wished to study the conditions under which the spine was placed in different actions of the limbs and body. I therefore procured a number of persons, chiefly artists' models, to go through various movements with the back naked. It does not seem advisable to transcribe here my voluminous notes of these experiments. Suffice it to say that in walking, sitting down, and rising again, and lifting even small weights, the spine bends from side to side. As might be expected, motions of the arms and shoulders influence chiefly the upper part; movements of the lower limbs, especially if the pelvis itself move, chiefly the lower part, of the spine. The former move-

ments only affect the column when either powerful or prolonged: for instance, a pound weight may be held in the hand outstretched without influencing the spine for a certain time, but when fatigue commences the column bends; a greater weight will at the moment of lifting cause bending of the column, produced in both instances by the spinal muscles which lie at the opposite side to that which carries the weight. Any movement which shifts the weight of the body from one leg to the other causes lateral flexion of the lumbar and lower dorsal spine; for instance, walking, especially ascending a staircase, causes deviation to the right and left, in some persons as high as the seventh dorsal, in others only to the tenth dorsal vertebra. Whenever the weight or movement be such as to cause more than the slightest lateral bend, either in back or loins, the other portion of the spine, loins, or back, as the case may be, assumes a curve in the contrary direction; of this I shall have to speak more fully in the sequel. With every lateral movement a commensurate amount of rotation is combined; it does not appear

possible to bend the spine sideways without at the same time rotating the vertebræ to a certain extent.

The results of the above experiments show by mechanical measurement, that the spine is normally capable of a great amount of rotation, and of lateral flexion—a result which is in direct contradiction to the theory of a recent author, which, in order probably to justify the application of steel splints, would endeavour to prove the spine all but immobile. The writer in question says: "Horizontal rotation of the vertebræ exists only in the most limited degree, if, indeed, it can be said to exist at all, in the dorsal and lumbar regions" (Adams 'On Lateral Curvature,' p. 177). "The flexibility of the spine in a lateral direction is extremely limited" (p. 42). "The appearance of lateral flexibility is largely contributed to by the free ball-and-socket articulation of the hips and of the head" (p. 42). The author has thus come to the singular conclusion that the spine is all but a stiff column, from certain arguments about the direction and position of the articulating pro-

cesses. The reasoning, however, is not very close; and we may be permitted to doubt its value when we encounter an explanatory diagram in which the axis of rotation is placed behind the tip of the spinous process, in which case rotation would indeed be limited. The axis of rotation between any two vertebræ is just behind the posterior edge of the bodies, *i. e.* in the spinal canal; and the spinal cord is placed close to that part of the vertebral bodies, *i. e.* in the axis of rotation, that pressure during such movement may be avoided.*

* I might in this place have omitted or modified the above references; but, since a short correspondence on this subject took place when these lectures appeared in the 'Lancet,' it seems to me more just to Mr. Adams to reproduce the matter exactly as it stood, and to annex the letters:—

"*To the Editor of* 'THE LANCET.'

"SIR,—I should be obliged by your permitting me to correct a misstatement of my views as to the flexibility of the spinal column in the dorsal and lumbar regions, made by Mr. Barwell, in the last number of 'The Lancet,' in a communication by him on Lateral Curvature of the Spine.

"After three fragmentary quotations, in the first of which an important part of the sentence is omitted without the usual sign (.....) to indicate such omission, Mr. Barwell states that 'the author' (alluding to myself) 'has thus come to the singular conclusion that the spine is all but a stiff column.' Now, pro-

My measurements, however, may be taken as indicating the normal movements of the

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bably, very few of your readers would believe that I could hold any such opinion; nor do I believe any one but Mr. Barwell would accuse me of promulgating 'a theory which, in order probably to justify the application of steel splints, would endeavour to prove the spine all but immovable.'

"Not content with a misstatement of my views, Mr. Barwell thinks proper to add an unworthy motive for such views in reference to the treatment adopted. I am at a loss to understand Mr. Barwell's motives for making such an imputation in the columns of 'The Lancet,' but will now ask any of your readers, who may be sufficiently interested in the subject, to refer to my recent work on 'Lateral and other Forms of Curvature of the Spine,' from pp. 26 to 48, where they will find the subject of horizontal rotation, and the flexibility of the spine in different directions and in different regions, fully discussed, and the observations of the highest recognised authorities referred to.

"As my object is simply to correct a misstatement, and not to enter into any controversial discussion upon points in Mr. Barwell's communication, I beg to say that I shall not further reply to any observations that may be made upon the subject.

"I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

"WILLIAM ADAMS.

"*Henrietta Street, Cavendish Square,*
"OCT. 22nd, 1867."

"*To the Editor of* 'THE LANCET.'

"SIR,—While begging of you space for this short answer to Mr. Adams' letter of last week, allow me, like him, to disclaim any desire for controversy.

"I am very sorry that Mr. Wm. Adams should think he has cause to complain that my quotations from his work on the Spine are fragmentary, but fail to perceive how, in a short paper, quotations from a large book can be otherwise. I have

spine. I desire to lay stress upon them because it will be found throughout the range

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again carefully read the chapters from which the quotations were taken, and, with the utmost liberality of interpretation, in the new light which Mr. William Adams' letter provides, cannot force upon the phrases any sense other than that which I have already given them. Indeed, when a writer, describing 'horizontal rotation-movement of the spinal column,' says 'the extremely limited extent of this movement' (p. 39); when he quotes and agrees with another author who says that the 'oblique processes' of the lumbar vertebræ 'prevent any twisting or spiral movement whatever of the trunk upon the axis' (p. 40); and when, throughout the chapter, the author constantly refers mobility to the head, hips, and lumbo-sacral joints, rather than to the spine,—I say, when an author writes thus, he must expect those of his readers who understand the meaning of language to conclude that he considers the spine very immobile. I do not at all understand how Mr. William Adams can imagine that I, in saying so, have misinterpreted the meaning of the chapter to which he refers.

"Besides misrepresentation, Mr. Adams charges me with a graver fault—namely, that I have accused him of 'unworthy motives' in that he justifies his practice by his theory. Sir, I believe that all practitioners prescribe medicines or appliances with reference to physiological or pathological doctrines formed by themselves or taught in the schools. I hope we all justify or endeavour to justify practice by theory. I may—indeed I do—differ widely from the practice and theory of Mr. Adams, and of the Orthopœdic Hospital generally. Nevertheless, I have never written a single word reflecting on the honour of its officers. It is not I, but Mr. Adams himself, who suggests that 'unworthy motives' are required to justify the application of steel supports to the vertebral column.

"I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

"RICHARD BARWELL.

"*George Street, Hanover Square,*
"Nov. 12th, 1867."

Having

of pathology, that all deformities which progress slowly, and do not owe their origin to

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Having done this justice to Mr. Adams, I must hold the balance even for myself. The sentence which I am accused of garbling, by omission of an important part, occurs not in the chapter in which mobility or rather immobility of the spine is discussed, but in a much later section where, in controverting another author, Mr. Adams sums up his ideas on the rotatory power of the spine in one sentence thus:—"The direction and extent of the movements of the spine in the different regions I have already fully discussed, and satisfactorily shewn that horizontal rotation of the bodies of the vertebræ—such as would be required to give the spiral twist to the vertebral column—exists only in the most limited degree, if indeed it can be said to exist at all, in the dorsal and lumbar regions, where lateral curvature commences, and in the latter is effectually prevented by the form and direction of the oblique articulatory processes." My own feeling is that no reader will imagine that the quotation in the text alters the meaning of the sentence. I am the more perplexed by Mr. Adams' letter, since the main argument of his work appears to be that lateral flexibility and rotation of vertebræ are in health either altogether absent or so insignificant that they can never deviate into morbid postures or deformities, as witness: —"Hence it is clear that when lateral curvature occurs in the lumbar region, which it does at least as frequently as in the dorsal, it is not simply an exag-

destructive disease of bones and joints, consist at first only in the persistence of a posture which can naturally be assumed, it is in itself normal. After a time the position becomes exaggerated, *i. e.* it is in itself abnormal—such morbid posture may continue a certain time, according to the part affected, and age of the patient, without producing deformation of either bones or ligament, and until such alteration is produced the deformity is curable.

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geration of a natural movement in this direction, as every anatomical provision is made to prevent lateral mobility" (p. 43).

CHAPTER II.

CAUSES OF DORSAL CURVATURE.

EACH group of vertebræ—viz., cervical, dorsal and lumbar—may be affected by circumstances which produce in them a permanent curvature to one side. But when the first of these regions is the seat of such disturbance the malady is termed "wry neck," and, its production being peculiar, it is not included in the term of lateral curvature. The dorsal and the lumbar region only, consisting of seventeen vertebræ, are therefore to be included in the consideration of this malady. Let us commence with certain definitions and explanations, which will make our subsequent work easier.

A curvature is named right or left according as the convexity of the curve looks to the one or other side.

In every curvature the aberrant vertebræ twist, so that the anterior faces of their bodies look towards the convexity of the curve, the spinous processes to the concavity.

It very seldom happens that the spine assumes one simple lateral curve in the same direction from end to end.* On the contrary, there are at least two, in opposite directions; the upper one is called the dorsal curve, the lower, lumbar: dorso-lumbar would, however, be the more correct term, since it occupies the two or three lowest bones of the back, as well as those of the loins. Of these two curves, one is directly caused by some external circumstance, the other is only an indirect sequence, being produced by the necessity of restoring the balance disturbed by the curvature first set up. Hence the one is called primary, the other secondary or compensating.

The terms primary and secondary must be understood as referring only to the sequence

* Nearly all the examples I have seen of this condition were manifestly hysterical.

of causes; for, since the necessity of balance produces the secondary curve, it must arise simultaneously, or nearly simultaneously, with the primary one.

When more than two curves appear they are called multiple.

We will first consider curvature primarily dorsal as the more frequent and more important form; and in doing so must bear well in mind the three coincidences already specified, namely,—torsion of vertebræ, predominance of dorsal curvature to the right side, preference of the disease for the female sex. These peculiarities have not as yet been satisfactorily accounted for, and, since they are essential characteristics, I must beg the reader to dismiss as untenable any theory—my own among them—which does not fully explain their occurrence and their constancy.

The vertebræ and the ligaments of the spine are passive, and of themselves motionless objects. If any disease or alteration of shape caused them to deviate or to twist, such malady would after death be very apparent, and would long ere this have been distinctly

described in morbid anatomy; but it would be highly improbable, if not absolutely impossible, that the same side of the vertebræ, and the same numerical vertebræ, should be so constantly almost exclusively affected, that the curve always influences the same bones. That is to say, in a double curvature a straight line from the last cervical vertebra to the middle of the sacrum will cross the S shaped curve once at the ninth dorsal vertebra, a few lines below or above its spinous process, and this whether the two curves be extreme or slight. Therefore those who ascribe these curves to a primary disease of bone or ligament are bound to give some pathological history of such malady, and to show cause why it should affect not only particular bones, or intermediate substances, but certain sides of these particular parts, with such remarkable constancy. We must then look outside the spine for the causes of its curve, *i. e.*, to the forces which normally bend the spine in different directions, viz., to the muscles. The muscular group classed together under the name of erectores spinæ, being situated along

and parallel with the column, can have very little or no influence in rotating the dorsal portion of the spine.*

In the course of making the experiments detailed in the foregoing chapter, I was anxious to find what those forces might be which produce that normal rotation of the column whose amount I had so carefully measured. Somewhat unexpectedly, I found that rotation of the vertebræ in all the upper part of the column is effected by the serratus magnus, which when thin persons are under observation stands out during such action strongly and sharply. Let the reader consider the anatomical relations of this part. Two muscles (rhombodei major and minor) arising from the spine at the root of the neck and top of the back are inserted into the base of the scapula; from this point the serratus spreads out fan-

* On the lumbar vertebræ, as we shall see in the sequel, their influence in this direction must be considerable; if, however, dorsal curvature were attributable to this group, it is impossible to find any reason why it should so constantly affect one and the same side, and a group of vertebræ, nor why it should so predominate in one sex.

shaped, to be attached to the ribs from the first to the ninth inclusive. For the particular

Rotating action of serratus.

action in question these muscles may be regarded as one broad fleshy layer, which, arising from the upper part of the spine,

sweeps round and embraces the back and sides of the chest; and in this view the intervening base of the scapula is to be considered merely as an intersection, like the semilunar lines in the abdominal rectus. This muscular arrangement acts at great advantage in turning the upper part of the body on the pelvis; its base of attachment to the spine is small, its leverage short, that to the chest very large, and in contracting it draws the ribs of that side backward. Each rib, having attachment to the body, and also to the transverse process of vertebræ, becomes thus a lever of the second class, whose power arm is the length from the muscular attachment to its head, whose weight arm is the distance from head to tubercle; it is indeed a crow-bar very powerful to twist each vertebra on its own axis. This function of the rib is attested by the fact that when the serratus ceases to be inserted, the spinal attachment of the rib no longer affords a purchase for such action. In losing the double conjunction to body and transverse process, the lower ribs abrogate the arrangement of fulcrum and weight necessary to lever-like

action on the vertebræ, and at the same time the serratus ceases to be attached to the ribs.

Now, let us consider the action of the serratus under another point of view. It has already been said, that only a very small portion of the weight of the shoulder is supported by the upper fibres of the trapezius, otherwise its action on the head would have to be counteracted by other muscles, which would greatly interfere with the freedom and mobility of the head and neck. Therefore the upper angle of the scapula hangs to the spine by its levator muscle; but the outer angle, the shoulder-joint and the arm, are supported by the serratus, which, drawing the base and lower angle of the shoulder outwards and forwards, keeps the outer angle (acromion and shoulder) upwards and backwards. The weight, therefore, of the shoulders, and of the arms falls, through the medium of the serrati, upon the ribs, and this weight tends to keep them back—equally, of course, on both sides of the chest if the arms be of equal weight.

The most important function, however, of the serrati is respiratory; they lift and draw

back the ribs on each side of the chest as far as the freedom at the joints permits, thus enlarging the cavity of the thorax. In forced inspiration this action is very marked; but man during quiet breathing hardly uses the muscle at all, his respiration being chiefly abdominal; woman's ordinary quiet breathing is, on the other hand, very much more pectoral, her chest and bosom rising constantly with each inspiration, even during sleep. In woman then, more than in man, the ribs are drawn backwards in inspiration—an action which would be equal on both sides of the chest if both lungs admitted the same quantity of air.

The hypothetical sentences at the end of the last two paragraphs are of importance. The arms are not of equal weight, nor are the lungs of the same size. A boy or youth, however, uses free exercise, swings his arms as he walks, and lolls and lounges about in all conceivable positions, thus giving variety to the manner in which the shoulders are supported; and, above all, he breathes chiefly by the diaphragm. The girl or young woman

takes less free exercise; in walking she lets the arm hang almost motionless from the shoulder, sits decorously upright, so that the weight of the arms hangs all day long, through the medium of the serratus magnus, on the ribs; and, far more important, her breathing is chiefly pectoral. Now let the ribs be regarded, in the manner above described, as powerful levers, which, under the sway of the serratus, can rotate the spine should the one muscle act more powerfully than its fellow; and consider the girl thus circumstanced, with the right arm heavier than the left, with the right lung more capacious than the left, and it will be seen that the serratus of the right side, being more weighted and in stronger respiratory action than its opponent, must of necessity rotate the vertebræ to the left side. This explanation will at once account for the rotation of vertebræ, and its prevalent direction. Moreover, a crucial proof, if I may use such a term, is found in the fact that European women, who by tight clothing round the waist and abdomen increase their tendency to

pectoral respiration, are the frequent subjects of lateral curvature; while among Hindoos, Arabs, and others who use a loose form of dress, such deformity is all but unknown.

Again, when part of one lung becomes, from some local disease, unfit for its function, the ribs covering that portion cease to move, and are uninfluenced by those particular serrations of the muscle. Therefore the corresponding ribs of the sound side bulge backward, and the cognate vertebræ become crooked. This is not produced by contraction of the lung on the diseased side (there is frequently rather swelling than decrease in bulk), but from inaction of the serratus over the affected spot; the opposite parts of the muscle therefore on the sound side must twist the vertebra, since their action is unbalanced on the morbid side of the chest. So accurate is this correspondence that we may fix upon the part of lung most affected, by noting the ribs which protrude on the sound side, and the locality of the spinal deviation. In curvature from consumption, we find nearly always a high short dorsal curve, as in a patient recently sent to

me by Dr. Cotton; in pneumonia the curve is low and long, as I have had more than once occasion to remark in cases at the Charing-cross Hospital.*

It will, of course, be remarked that in this explanation I entirely change the sequence of causality. It is usually stated that the spine first curves laterally, then rotates, and in this latter movement, by dragging with it the ribs, deforms the chest. I affirm that the ribs are primarily drawn backwards, and, acting as levers, twist the vertebræ, which in consequence deviate from the right line—according to a simple mechanical law, and yielding to the new direction in which the erectors of the spine now act; for in this rotated condition straightening the spine curves it naturally to the right, and in lateral curva-

* By no other method can we account for the fact that in pleurisy, when the size of the contents on one side of the chest is increased, and afterwards, when, the lung being bound down by adhesions, their size is diminished, we still have curvature in the same direction—*i. e.*, from the diseased side; the ribs on that side ceasing to move on respiration.

ture much of the sideways distortion is in reality displaced extension.

In this etiology the different weight of the two arms is not nearly of so much importance as the peculiarities of the respiratory function; yet even in the male subject the spine is twisted slightly to the right so frequently that such condition is by some regarded as normal. A man, after the amputation of one arm, acquires by the action of unequal weight a certain amount of lateral twist, rarely sufficient to constitute a noticeable deformity. When, however, a girl carries a weight constantly on one arm, its power in contorting the spine becomes considerable, and we occasionally find nurse-girls become very crooked from such cause. In these cases the lumbar muscles on the other (the left) side of the spine are found very much developed in consequence of increased action counterbalancing the burden carried.* In such cases the compensatory lumbar curve is established simply

* This condition must be distinguished from mere ·ging of the parts through backward projection of ·nsverse processes, as will be shortly explained.

for the sake of balance; not so the secondary curve in cases arising from respiratory causes. The two forms are distinct, not only in causation but in form, and in the action of subtending muscles.

If the two causes (one-sided pectoral breathing and the influence of weight) be combined, as is frequently the case, their distorting power is very great; but the former is undoubtedly the more influential, and is continuous both night and day. European women, as above stated, increase this peculiarity of thoracic breathing by wearing tight petticoat-strings, corsets, and belts round the waist; also many plump girls, in desire to restrain any unsightly, however blameless, enlargement of the abdomen, frequently compress that part with belts or corsets, and thus, by almost entirely checking the respiratory movements of the abdomen, place themselves in a position of dangerous facility for acquiring dorsal curvature.

This leads me, even at the risk of future repetition, to consider the grave cause of objection to the "spinal support" of orthopædy.

It is easily perceptible that there is great difficulty, or rather impossibility, in fixing around the pelvis a steel hoop so immovably that a lever springing thereform can make effective pressure on a protuberant portion of the spine or ribs. In order, however, to render the pelvic hoop of a spinal support as little movable as possible, straps and bandages fastened upon the instrument encircle and are tightly laced upon and around the abdomen. We have, however, just seen that excessively thoracic breathing of women (since the right lung is larger than the left) is the real and efficient cause of dorsal deformity. Such exaggeration of woman's natural character of respiration is produced chiefly or entirely by tight swathing of the abdomen; for where this form of dress is not used, as in hot climates, lateral curvature is a very rare deformity. It is hardly necessary that I should ask the reader to compare the cause of lateral curvature with its prevalent treatment by an instrument which in every possible way adds largely to the very root and origin of the malady, by preventing abdominal move-

ment in breathing. Nor need attention be called to the singular fact that tight rigid stays have always, with justice, been regarded as productive of lateral curvature; yet as soon as a girl shows any inclination to that deformity, she, under such treatment, is fixed in stays, more tight, more heavy, and more onerous than the most tyrannous devotee of a barbarous fashion could invent. Yet we must, in justice, state that in a certain small number of cases these instruments have produced benefit—namely, in such as are caused, not by the more usual respiratory conditions above mentioned, but in that far smaller number produced by distribution of weight always to one side of the body. In such cases the good is effected by the crutch-handle, which relieves the serratus magnus of the weight of the right shoulder. This may, however, be effected, in the cases where it is desirable, by means far simpler, and which do not produce such restraint and so many evils.

The production of the secondary curve (lumbar) is somewhat different in each class

of case; for though, in either, two groups of muscles are called into play, viz., spinal and abdominal, yet the degree of their participation is not the same in both.

Let us first consider the formation of a lumbar curve consecutive to a weight-bearing dorsal curvature. A weight carried on the right arm alters in the figure the place of the centre of gravity; and in order to bring this within the points of support, the body is thrown over to the left side; the spine forms at first one simple curve to the right. This, as I have found by experiment on a number of individuals, is always the first new posture of the column, unless the weight be considerable in proportion to the person's strength. If the object be very heavy, or if the time for supporting it be prolonged, the spine, instead of bending thus simply, will form two curves; the upper one to the right will increase, and will be supplemented by another contrary curve in the loins.

Now, while the spine is straight as in infancy, the erectores spinæ muscles are placed at a mechanical disadvantage for

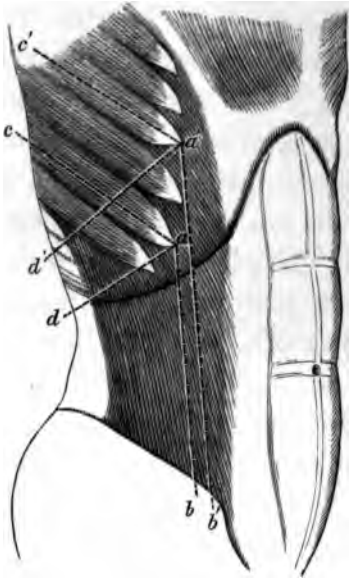
moving the bones in any direction, since a cord running parallel to and in close contact with a straight staff has less power in bending that staff than if it ran in any other direction. When, through the actions described in the former chapter, the column assumes its antero-posterior curves, the influence of the muscles is improved, as far as backward and forward movement is concerned; but still remain—since the column in a lateral direction is straight—in a disadvantageous posture for producing sideways movement. But when the spine, weighted as above described, has become crooked (and this first step is chiefly through the medium of abdominal muscles), the erectores are in a better position for the above action, and of course have most power over those vertebræ which have chiefly deviated from the right line. We therefore find, in all lateral curvatures of weight-bearing origin, a line of strong muscular development running from the back of the ilium to the most aberrant vertebræ. This line is marked in proportion to the weight carried and to the rapidity with which the curve is formed. I

must, however, warn the unaccustomed observer against mistaking the projection formed by prominent transverse processes in a rotated lumbar spine for muscular enlargement.

The production of the compensating curve in the much more frequent cases of respiratory origin is very different. In normal breathing inspiration is produced by descent of the diaphragm, together with relaxation of the abdominal muscles and protrusion of the belly. When such movement is restrained by any pressure over the abdomen, this relaxation is prevented, but the same cause does not prevent—indeed it rather abets—constant contraction of the abdominal muscles. The spine, however, twisting to the right, relieves the tension of the left side, while that on the right is increased, not merely by this twist, but by the respiratory elevation of the ribs. Thus upon these right ribs two forces act at an angle to one another: one from the pelvis drawing them down, the other from the spine drawing them upwards and backwards. These forces balance each other, since during life there is no alteration of the costo-spinal angle; but

the pelvis, in its relationship to the trunk, is a fixed point, the spine a movable one. Hence, although the former force does not change the posture of the ribs on the spine, it draws ribs and spine *en masse*, *i. e.* the whole trunk down to the right hip-bone, causing the loins to bend chiefly at or near the second lumbar vertebra: such, at least, is the point at which in practice we find the greatest aberration. If we consider this subject in a more mechanical point of view, the problem may be placed thus:—Upon each rib two forces act, at an angle to each other, and the resultant movement must be in a line within the angle. Since the rib itself does not move on the spine, the forces are even, therefore this line of motion must bisect the angle; and, of course, the point of movement must be where that line intersects the next jointed part of the body. The annexed rough diagram represents, on the right side, the lines of force of the serrati and external oblique with the bisecting lines of movement. Now, if these measurements be made on the subject, and the lines carefully drawn, it will be found that they all converge

to a space between the first and third lumbar vertebræ. Hence, in cases of respiratory origin, unless far advanced, we find on the



a b, and *c' a b'*, the angle of serratus and lateral oblique at seventh and ninth ribs; *a d*, and *a d'*, the bisecting line.

left loin no line of strong muscular development present in the weight-bearing curve; but on the right side we find exaggerated muscular marking about the side and flank,

with—what will most strike the unaccustomed observer—a twisting of the umbilicus. These diagnostic signs will require especial consideration in the sequel.

CHAPTER III.

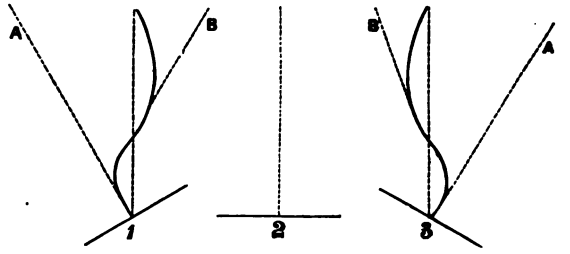
CAUSES OF LUMBAR CURVATURE.

In order to trace the simpler etiology of lumbar curves, I would remind the reader of those parts in the first chapter, which refer to the normal movements of the spine in different actions of the body. The erect human figure has but two points of support, and in locomotion the weight is thrown alternately from one to the other: thus a certain shifting of the centre of gravity takes place, so as to bring it over the right and left foot by turns. Such movement occurs even in walking along level ground; and, besides this, the pelvis twists a little with every step, so that first one side and then the other is advanced, and the side projected forward is at the same time lifted. These conditions necessitate certain movements of the spine, which may be felt, as

before stated, in some as high as the seventh dorsal, in others only to the tenth or eleventh dorsal. The highest movements of the column are, *cæteris paribus*, to be found in women, a fact which is, I believe, attributable to their greater breadth of pelvis.

Since the actions of limbs and pelvis alternate, so must the spine move from side to side, producing those exquisite curves of graceful action which the Greeks so wonderfully understood. These, I say, take place even in walking over a level space; they are, of course, increased in such actions as ascending a staircase, or more unevenly, but to a larger extent, in passing over broken ground. Such curves (without, however, the pelvic twist) can be well observed in the back of one sitting on a prancing horse or sailing over a chopping sea; but it is most thoroughly to be observed by seating an individual, sideways and barebacked, on a plank contrived to rock on a fitting support placed under the centre of gravity. An observer standing behind the subject of experiment will see alternating undulations of the spine, as depicted in the

accompanying diagram. If the whole spine remained at right angles to the pelvis when



2, The horizontal position. 1 and 3, Rocking to right and left. The dotted lines, A A, the direction of lower lumbar vertebræ. B B, The direction of dorso-lumbar spine. The central dotted line, a perpendicular. The dark lines, curves of spine.

its transverse axis became oblique (1 and 3, A A), the line of gravity would fall outside the support; therefore the spine bends to the right. Moreover, since the centre of gravity lies so low in the body, this bend must be sharp. If the upper part of the trunk followed the direction of the loins (1 and 3, B B), the balance would be over-corrected; hence the dorsal portion must assume a contrary curve. These movements, though owing to the necessities of balance, are of course produced entirely by muscular action.

All observant people are aware that they very seldom see an individual standing with

the weight equally distributed between the two feet—*i. e.*, with a perpendicular spine erect upon a horizontal pelvis. On the contrary, the ordinary standing position is a little crooked, the weight is thrown more on one leg than on the other, the pelvis is more or less oblique, and there is a commensurate bend therefore in the lumbar spine, to which the second and third vertebræ chiefly contribute, while a long consecutive curve is formed in the dorsal region. Now it is evident that if any peculiarity cause this pelvic obliquity, with its chain of consequences, to occur always on the same side, the position will by degrees become more marked, and ultimately permanent. This influence is, of course, most potent in cases, where some malady of the lower limbs produces a continual inclination of the pelvis. Thus an individual with a varous foot, an anchylosed knee, or contracted hip, being forced to curve the back in a manner compensating the pelvic obliquity, will, after a time, most certainly acquire a morbid bend of the spine towards the lower side of the pelvis; and although, in the early part of

the case, such curve is annulled when the pelvic obliquity is for the moment artificially corrected, or when the patient lies down, yet it will after a time become permanent, and does not thus disappear.

From this statement it becomes evident that bad habits of walking or position, which render the pelvis oblique, will also produce lumbar curvature with a rapidity proportionate to the inveteracy of the habit. The potency of a cause which at first glance would appear so slight will be more readily appreciated if the attachment of muscles supporting the spine on the pelvis be considered. These are, besides the abdominal muscles—whose power has already been mentioned,—the *erectores spinæ*, the quadratus lumborum and the psoas: the mere supporting action of the two first is evident; it will be necessary to refer to them again, but just now I desire to call attention to the last. The psoas has, as we have seen, very considerable influence in producing the anterior curve of the lumbar spine, through the tension exerted on them by the erect posture of the thighs; the muscle

runs from these vertebræ to the back part of the inner side of the femur, in such wise that all movements of the limb, except, possibly, ab- and adduction—that is to say, extension, flexion, inward and outward rotation — all either extend or relax this muscle. A temporary movement of this sort, a position assumed casually and for a time, will not affect a spine, supported as it is by other muscles; but a constant and overweening posture is less guarded against, and the parts gradually yield. It is not at the moment of active force that malposture is produced, but during the relaxation of an ill-regulated repose. Thus other postures, besides those causing obliquity in the transverse direction of the pelvis, as sitting cross-legged, have their effect in producing a lumbar curve; indeed all positions which twist the pelvis and cause unequal tension of the thighs are especially prone to produce this condition.*

* Three cases have come under my notice, in which I could distinctly trace the origin of lumbar curve to this position. Its powerful effect has three causes:— One, that the thigh crossed (say the left) is placed higher than the other, and rotated outwards (relaxing

All such tricks in young growing people should be checked, but more especially in girls, who, leading generally a less active life, are more exposed to the influence of such habits, and whose greater width of pelvis adds to the danger. The deformity comes on so very slowly, as rarely to be detected by daily companions, but is generally first observed by a dress-maker or dancing-master, who points out that one or the other hip protrudes; for while in dorsal curves prominence of a shoulder first attracts attention, the prominent hip is the first observed defect in those affected with lumbar curve.

In the above description all reference to rotation of vertebræ has been omitted, that the succession of events might with greater ease be followed: nevertheless rotation is part and parcel of this malady—one of the neces-

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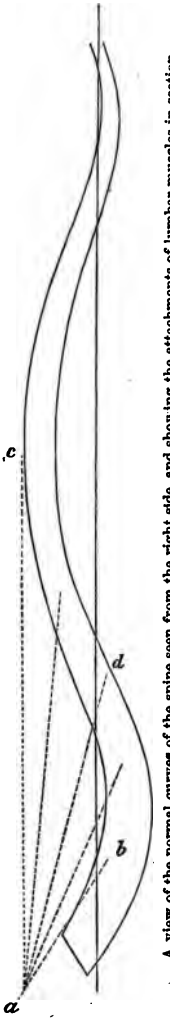
the left psoas); another, that the knee is advanced in front of the right one—*i. e.*, the pelvis is twisted; a third, the weight is thrown chiefly on the right haunch. All these aid in producing curvature to the right, leaving the weight of the body constantly more on one leg than on the other.

sary conditions of the muscular action which induces the curve.

The adjoining diagram shows the spine, with its normal antero-posterior curves very carefully reduced to scale. The erectores spinæ is not to my mind well described in English anatomical works, they do not define the differences in mass of various parts of this muscle as they really exist. The incurvation of the loins, from close to the skin to the lumbar transverse process, is filled up by a muscular mass, which in a grown man is about two inches thick. Most of the fibres run forwards, and more or less upwards, and gain insertion in the transverse processes; others, the more superficial ones, pass



A view of the normal curves of the spine seen from the right side, and showing the attachments of lumbar muscles in section. Angle *b*, *a*, *d*, the lumbar. Angle *c*, *a*, *d*, the dorsal part of the muscle.

directly upwards, and, dividing into two portions, are fixed, the outer part, to the ribs, the inner to the dorsal transverse processes. Thus a longitudinal section through the body on the plane of the tips of the transverse process would discover the muscle as a fan-shaped mass; it will readily be seen, from the above diagram, that the lower or lumbar portion must act as a rotator, the upper simply as an extensor.

It cannot be too strongly impressed upon the minds of those unaccustomed to examine these cases, that the rotation always takes place so that the fronts of the vertebræ face towards the convexity of the curve: in consequence of this the transverse processes on that convexity may be felt with more or less distinctness according to the amount of bend; and, in thus rising from the depths to the surface of the loins, they lift with them the muscles and other soft parts, while on the other side the transverse processes sink deeply towards the abdomen; and the lumbar muscles sink with them, so that losing their hard support, they become soft and doughy. This con-

dition on the convex side has been mistaken for violent or spastic contraction of muscle; and the view has led to sundry infelicitous errors in theory and practice. For instance, these muscles have been cut, and, singular to relate, M. Guerin, who originated this operation, has cut muscles sometimes on the convex, sometimes on the concave side of the spine with, according to his published writings, equally brilliant results: indeed, this operation has been revived at one of the many special Hospitals. It is a pity that the strong condemnation passed upon it by a commission of the most celebrated Parisian surgeons has not deterred orthopædists from this justly condemned procedure. Its future fate can be foreseen with only too great facility, it is written in the pages of the past. While subcutaneous myotomy and tenotomy were still new, its employment was in Paris transferred from the limbs to the trunk, and a certain number of cases suffered under the knife; while the debility thus induced permitted the scaffoldings to work with greater ease, the operator, and perhaps his patients, buoyed

themselves with hopes that a cure was hatching—the cases were published with considerable parade and flourish, and a few more induced to undergo myotomy. Then came a time when some ventured to express distrust of these results. That feeling gradually gained ground, and after a time it was found that at a period when, if a cure had been effected, the patient might have dispensed with mechanism, a stronger support instead of a slighter one was needed: the back became weaker, and collapsed when the irons were removed, at last was scarcely able, even with strong instruments, to uphold the trunk at all. Then these cases were not so much paraded; the Academy pronounced a condemnation of the procedure; and the whole thing has been quietly interred, until in these latter days, when its ineffectual ghost haunts us once again.

CHAPTER IV.

DIAGNOSIS OF DIFFERENT CURVES.

We have seen that a broad and marked distinction between a curve primarily lumbar, and one primarily dorsal, lies in the fact that in the former a prominent hip, in the latter a prominent shoulder, is first observed; that is, such changes give rise to the most marked symptom of each malady. Thus, though a dorsal curve very rapidly, perhaps instantaneously, calls forth a lumbar, and the primarily lumbar is closely followed by a secondary dorsal, yet the peculiar first alteration remains characteristic till, at all events, a late period, and not unfrequently throughout the case; and this peculiarity is not the lateral sinuosity of the column, but the twist backwards of parts on the convex side of the spine, or, if it be very early in the case, on the side which will become convex.

Thus, if the surgeon be about to examine a patient with the desire of finding out whether or no the spine be crooked, he will be judicious in directing attention rather to the parts above named than to the line of the spinous processes, for the following reasons :—When, in the commencement of the malady, the vertebræ begin to deviate, they do so in two manners—rotation and lateral movement. Now, the tip of the spinous process—which, until there is considerable displacement, is the only bit of the bone we can feel—is that very part which in rotating moves most away from the side to which lateral displacement tends: therefore there is a stage in the condition, when the tips of these processes will lie in a straight continuous line, and yet the vertebræ will have been considerably displaced. But, if we direct our research to the parts at the side of the spine, we find that these, be they ribs or lumbar and pelvic bones, have been so displaced that, under good auspices of lighting, the eye will detect the want of symmetry, or a practised hand will distinguish the variation of level. Some stress is laid upon the mode of lighting,

because in an ordinary window light any horizontal gradual protuberance or undulation can hardly be detected; but, with a perpendicular light, the shoulder in the one class, the hip, or rather haunch, in the other class of curve, receives on its prominence a strong ray, and throws a long shadow under its elevation. I have the advantage of possessing two consulting-rooms, and have found that an amount of torsion so slight as to be not at all or doubtfully perceptible in the one light was unmistakably evident in the other. The fact of unsymmetrical shading of the torso must provisionally be considered as sufficiently indicative of a spinal curve. We shall speak of more conclusive symptoms in the sequel. Instances of this condition will be found in the annexed engraving for the one form, and in the cut at p. 68 for the other.

After having decided on the existence of a spinal curve, the next points for examination are these:—firstly, is it primarily dorsal or primarily lumbar? and, if the former, to which class of dorsal curves does the distortion belong? The former question must be

answered by observation concerning relative protuberance of the hip or of the posterior pectoral walls. I will describe the differential diagnosis as shortly as possible, since the peculiarities of each case must be again discussed in their special description. The mere projection of the scapula is comparatively a late symptom in dorsal curve: previous to its appearance a certain bulging beneath and outside the angle of the blade-bone becomes evident. In lumbar curve, again, the lateral projection of the hip—that which alters the mere outline of the figure—is later than a posterior projection of the innominate bone, marked by protuberance backward of the parts lying just outside the sacro-ilac joint; while the figure above this, though it may not have altered to the view, will be found by touch harder on one side of the spine than on the other—a difference resulting from the unsymmetrical positions of the transverse processes, not from muscular transformations. Diagnosis in all disease is simple enough, if strongly marked types of malady be assumed; the skill of an observer is shown in his power

of distinguishing in early stages where the typical conditions, though present, are still only in part developed. Now, in all cases of dorsal curve, the mere lateral undulations of the bones of the spine will not afford any ground for diagnosis; but the variations in collateral parts give ample means for distinguishing the forms, under such conditions as I have named. In the very earliest stages, the costal prominence backward of a dorsal curve is unaccompanied by any pelvic change—nor in an equally early stage of lumbar curve, is the backward gluteal projection combined with any pectoral alteration; but these, with certain others hereafter described, will indicate the presence of a lateral curve before the line of the spinous processes has deviated to any appreciable extent. In later stages a curve primarily dorsal will be accompanied by lateral prominence of the other hip, but never by the peculiar backward prominence above described.

The diagnosis between lumbar and dorsal curvature being now formed, it will be de-

sirable to point out the peculiarities of each; and first of the dorsal curve.

The backward projection of the scapula is, I have said, a rather late symptom, and it will be well to explain its occurrence. The first motive of a dorsal curve is, as has been shown, over-action in one serratus,—*e.g.*, the right, which draws back, and a little upwards, the ribs; it follows that inequality in the walls of the chest will be an early sign. Moreover, since a slight twist in such short and such well-covered bones as the vertebræ can hardly be detected, but becomes very evident in such long levers as the ribs, it follows that, although from their anatomical connections both parts must rotate at the same time, yet the ribs by their length will act as indices, and enable us at once to detect an amount of rotation not evidenced by the shorter bones. In their backward progress the ribs begin to press upon the soft parts which separate them from the scapula, and these all yield, to a certain extent, before the pressure becomes sufficient to raise the bone itself: thus in the earlier stages the scapula may still be in

normal position. Be it also remembered that the shoulder is very movable, and it frequently happens that in making examination of a young woman we shall find, in spite of all possible care to keep the arms in position and the back upright, that sometimes one, sometimes the other bladebone will project more than its fellow, on account of some irregular action of muscles induced by the exposure to the air of parts usually covered, a sense of shyness, or impress of the surgeon's finger. Such impress is necessary: for, while examination by the eye is highly essential, we must also use touch; feeling not only for the projection of the ribs of transverse processes on the right side, and their depression on the left, but also for the line of the spinous processes. It will hardly be necessary, in this advanced stage of our investigations, to repeat that the axis of rotation lies just at the posterior margin of the vertebral bodies, and that the tips of the spinous processes being twisted to the left may still be in a straight line, although the spine itself will have deviated considerably; but it will be well to

point out a peculiarity which, as far as I know, has not been noticed. There is in the skin of the back a mesial line, or broad raphé, very plainly marked by absence of hair-follicles and gland-ducts, and by the opposed direction of those structures on each side. This line, while the back is straight, lies over the spinous projections; but when these latter deviate they glide beneath the skin, and may wander considerably from the mesial line without drawing the raphé with them. Therefore it is not sufficient to examine by sight alone, for the superficial marking will be sure to mislead the eye as to the position of deeper parts. If the case be advanced beyond the very earliest stage, the surgeon will be able to feel the tips of the spinous processes on one side (under the circumstances postulated on the right side) of this line, and about an inch further the transverse processes begin—as the curve advances—to be perceptible, or, at the least, there will be the hardness produced by their retrogression towards the surface.

Although it is desirable to avoid examining the front of the figure as much as possible,

yet it is well to know the changes which take place. These are very early, and, since they depend upon torsion to the right side, are very simple. In normal conditions, a straight line—a piece of cord, for instance—laid upon the middle of the first sternal bone, and passed between the thighs, should bisect the breast-bone, the xiphoid cartilage, and the umbilicus, running over a well-defined abdominal raphé. In lateral curvature, a line similarly placed on the upper piece of the sternum, and held in the same way, no longer coincides with these mesial parts of the body; but the breast-bone slants away from it to the right, the xiphoid cartilage and the umbilicus lie altogether to its right. The part most deviated is the tip of the ensiform cartilage: thus the cord forms the base of an obtuse triangle, the sides which subtend the blunt angle being formed by the mesial line of the sternum above, and by the linea alba of the abdomen below. Coincident with this deviation are certain changes in the apparent size of the left and right chest: we have seen that the right ribs are drawn back, and the vertebræ, by their rota-

tion, throw the left ribs forward; thus, viewed from the front, the chest presents an appearance just the contrary to its aspect from

The patient had a far advanced respiratory curvature; for which she had worn instruments of considerable weight for some years. Note the absence of any projection of lumbar muscles on the left side; the line of light running from the ilium is simply the edge of the body and of the hollow from sinking forward of the ribs; it springs from the ilium far outside the erector spinæ.

behind, viz.—the right side appears small and shrunken, the left prominent and on a plane further forward than its fellow.

A great aid to diagnosis, or rather, let me say, a reliable means of confirming or negativing conclusions drawn from subtle changes of form, is to be found in the rotation measurer, which I have already described. After having studied the results of experiments with this instrument on the healthy subject, I expected, when first applying it to patients, to find that rotation to the side towards which the spine curves (let us suppose the right) would be greater than in the opposite direction. I soon found, however, that this notion was directly contrary to the truth: rotation to the right side is decreased; while to the left that power is relatively, I believe often absolutely, increased. The reason of this is not far to seek: it lies in the facts that the bones have already performed a certain part of their possible rotatory journey to the right, and the chief muscle for this action (serratus magnus) has, in a measure, done its work. Torsion to the left, on the other hand, replaces the bones and liga-

ments, and the muscle itself is not merely in a state of quiet, but is in such a position as renders the range of its action larger than usual. Accordingly, in all cases of lateral curvature, the index of my instrument indicates to right and left a difference in degrees, whose number corresponds with the extent of the curvature. A small margin of difference often, indeed generally, occurs in perfectly straight spines; but this surplusage is nearly always to the right, and does not exceed five degrees; such difference, especially in that direction, may be discarded.*

Since, then, the rotation measurer marks a greater or less amount of difference as the case is more or less severe, the instrument becomes of great value as an index of success in treatment; since if the patient be improving the discordance diminishes, and in-

* We must here except the cases in which the ordinary orthopædic supports have been worn. Spines subjected to that treatment are usually stiff, and the muscles much wasted, so that they rotate but very little and unevenly; therefore no information can be gained from their action.

creases if she be getting worse. Thus I shall in the sequel mark the progress of certain related cases by a diary of rotation, to show the precision of its indications.

When the mere existence of a dorsal curvature has been detected, we must then, in order to apply treatment aright, distinguish the class of curve to which the case belongs, and must primarily divide these distortions into two sets—the curve from respiratory causes, and the curve of weight-bearing origin.

In the *Weight-bearing* class of cases I have observed but one sort—it is that which has been already in part described. The curve occupies the upper three-fourths of the dorsal region, and the return for the compensatory curve commences with the lower fourth. A straight line—a silken thread, for instance—stretched between the last cervical vertebra and the middle of the sacrum crosses the double curve *once* at the ninth dorsal vertebra. The most aberrant bones are the fifth dorsal to one side, the second lumbar to the other.*

* These numbers may not be absolutely rigid, but are remarkably uniform.

A well-marked rounded eminence of muscular contraction runs upward from the back part of the ilium to the most aberrant vertebra. Most of these curves are to the right; but as *all* respiratory curves, lung-disease being absent, are to the right (save in the very exceptional instances of visceral transposition), a curve primarily dorsal to the left, if the breathing apparatus be sound, and if the heart beat on the left side of the chest, may be certainly set down as weight-bearing. There is to be traced in almost all of these cases some history of hard work, generally at an early age, as constantly carrying an infant or other weight, &c. By far the larger proportion of this sort of curve belongs, therefore, to the working class. They are less frequent, and for that and other reasons less important, than the respiratory curves. They are also more easily cured if the individuals can so far alter their habits as to relieve the overworked muscles. This concession is, however, in that class of persons with difficulty obtained.

Of the *Respiratory Curves* there are two sorts: the one arising from external causes,

restraint of abdominal breathing, and even certain bad habits; the other originating in some malady of the lung and appendices. This latter class of cases is not only very interesting, but of great moment, and it will be well to draw attention strongly to certain important features, especially on that view of the lung malady on which, as a surgeon, I am authorised to speak—viz., of the form, state, and position of curves which should lead us to anticipate internal disease.

This class of curve is then always (save in the extremely rare cases of transposed viscera) to the right; it occupies, like that from weight-bearing, the upper three-fourths of the dorsal spine, and the point of greatest aberration falls on the same vertebræ. It is barely possible to distinguish between the two classes by the mere form of the curve alone; yet, since differences exist in its aspects, and as certain extraneous characteristics are obvious, the distinction can always be made. The upper limb of the curve is more marked, the lower less so, and both are less straight—that is to say, suppose the fifth dorsal vertebra at a given dis-

tance of lateral deviation in the weight-bearing curves, the lines of spinous processes running upward and downward from this vertebra are almost straight, so that it seems to be in an angle; in the respiratory form the curve, though equal in amount, is more evenly distributed over the nine upper dorsal bones. There is no line of strong muscular development running up from the back of the ilium; the secondary curve is, in proportion, less severe.

Curves of internal origin assume a variety of shapes, from the gradual long curve occupying all, or nearly all, of the dorsal region, to the well-marked short and sudden aberration of two or three vertebræ occurring anywhere between the first and the tenth. These latter, particularly if they be high, are generally connected with tubercle of the lung. Pneumonia induces, as a rule, the low long curve which, even when the functions of the lung have been restored, continues for a long time, perhaps permanently, after the attack has passed off. Pleurisy produces several forms of curve, but chiefly a high curve, longer and less

sharp than the consumptive curvature. In my second paper I hinted at the etiology of these deformations; they do not arise from contraction on the diseased side, but from the fact that when any portion of the lung becomes unfit to perform its office, or when disease renders such performance painful, the rib or ribs, over that part of the organ cease to move, while those on the other side continue, under the sway of the serratus, to act unopposed upon the vertebræ, and twist them round. If we consider the great power of the ribs as levers, the length of their power-arm, the shortness of their weight-arm, we shall comprehend the sensitiveness of the spine to their action.

In the course of these papers a cause which is often given for lateral curve has been omitted—viz., "*position*;" and this has been done because *position* of the spine itself—*i. e.*, different habits of sitting or lying—does not often in my experience produce this deformity. Position of pelvis and thighs is, as we have seen, the efficient cause of curvatures primarily lumbar; position of the ribs of those primarily

dorsal. The shoulder and arm are, as a rule, in such varied movement that curvature very rarely depends on their posture; nevertheless, I shall immediately give a striking example to the contrary.

In considering the causes of these changes in form of dorsal curve, we must dismiss from our minds all inconclusive and unsatisfactory theories concerning its origin in spastic contraction of muscles—in paralysis of respiratory function, in softening or inflammation of bones, intervertebral substance, &c., and accept entirely the simple, and, as it appears to me, adequate doctrine taught in these chapters—that in the sequence of causes for dorsal curvature torsion precedes lateral deviation—that none of the spinal muscles proper are capable of producing such rotation; but that the lever-like arrangement of the ribs, enabling the serrati to turn the trunk in either direction, gives to those muscles, when unilaterally and unduly exerted, the power of inflicting on the vertebræ a permanent twist, which of necessity is followed by lateral deviation. Perhaps, however, some of my readers,

unaccustomed to watch the power of muscles in producing deformity, will scarcely estimate the extreme sensitiveness of the spine to the exaggerated action of one serratus. Let the following case illustrate this point:—

Mr. ———, aged nineteen, came to me on the 9th of February, 1867, with a far advanced dorsal curve to the right. He was by no means weakly, but on the other hand muscular, being used to strong exercise, more especially with the dumb-bells. Rotation was very marked, the ribs and the lower angle of the scapula projecting very much backward: but there was something very peculiar in the distortion; it bore, markedly, all the characteristics of a weight-bearing curve, with the exception of its most prominent feature —the strong development of the left sacro-lumbalis and longissimus dorsi. It is true that he confessed to using the dumb-bells rather more with the right than with the left hand; but in all my previous cases I had always found such or similar work produce with the curve the muscular elevation so often mentioned. The condition was, to my mind, so anomalous that I re-examined all my minute records, my photographs, and my theory of lateral curvature. On his second visit I observed this peculiarity of attitude: he always stood with the right hand placed far back on the hip or on the loins, and threw his elbow as far back as possible. I kept him with me as long a time as I could spare, and standing as much as possible. He maintained constantly this attitude; and, on questioning him, I found

it was habitual. Thus, then, was my difficulty not only solved, but a singular proof added to my observations. This position, by throwing back the base of the scapula, caused the serratus to drag upon the ribs, and not only the absence of an extra burden, but the fact of his supporting the weight of the trunk on the right hand, precluded the extra development of the left erectores spinæ.

A few less well-marked dorsal curves, produced by position, doubtless occur — such postures, for instance, as sempstresses, book-stitchers, &c., assume, cause occasionally long and slight dorsal deviations; but the generality of curvatures owing their origin to posture are undoubtedly lumbar.

Although the differential diagnosis between lumbar and dorsal curvature has been shortly and succinctly given, it will be desirable to recur to certain of the signs of lumbar curvature, and to enforce the distinction with greater minuteness. As the primarily dorsal curve commences above, in posterior procession of the ribs, so the primary lumbar curve begins in a similar displacement of other parts, viz., of certain portions of the pelvis. Let us, *exempli gratiâ*, assume that

the curvature under examination be lumbar to the right—that is to say, such a curve is about to appear; but, long previously to any absolute change in the spinal bones, we observe an alteration in neighbouring parts, revealed, as already stated, under a perpendicular light. In all these cases it is of the utmost importance to obtain the earliest reliable diagnostic sign of the morbid condition, and I would strongly impress upon my readers that the mere lateral protrusion of the hip, whereby the deformity is first recognised by parents, dressmakers, or other unskilled observers, is in reality a late symptom. A peculiar backward projection of the pelvis, *i. e.*, of the haunch, or, to be more precise, of the parts just outside the sacro-iliac joint, on the side towards which the spine is about to, or has become convex, is the earliest symptom.

This change, though more marked in some cases than in others, is, in my experience, always present in a curve primarily lumbar: it may be detected long before lateral projection supervenes, while lateral deviation of the spine can hardly, or not at all, be recognised.

A woodcut will be found at p. 119, which, chiefly intended to show a form of bandage, has been carefully drawn in well chosen light and shade, and therefore gives with considerable accuracy this diagnostic projection. It is not, however, to be supposed that this one symptom is to be accepted as the integral diagnosis, although it is in the earliest stage all that is perceptible to the eye; if, however, we examine by touch the parts just above the pelvis, and contiguous to the spinous processes, we find that on one side—that of the protuberant pelvis—the parts will be harder, more resilient than the other; a little later, the transverse processes will be felt on deep pressure, and, as they become more perceptible, the line of the spine gradually yields and curves towards the indurated side.

CHAPTER V

SIGNS OF CURABILITY.

BEFORE passing on to consider what sort of treatment will best befit the conditions whose origin has been in the foregoing chapters explained, it will be well to examine what circumstances would in any given case lead us to view it as curable or the reverse. To gain a clear insight into these peculiarities the reader must dismiss from his mind all those inconclusive theories which have been already shortly examined. It has been shown (p. 4) that the origin of lateral curvature cannot possibly be in diseases of vertebral bodies, nor of intervertebral substances, neither in weakness, nor in spastic contraction of spinal muscles; since, under such circumstances, we should find preference of this malady neither for one side nor for one sex. Nevertheless an

advocate for cutting the spinal muscles has recently insisted on this theory, because he has found in certain autopsies the *erectores spinæ* of one side degenerated. He appears to forget or ignore that all muscles, partly or entirely thrown out of gear, and out of use, are by the imposed restraint subject to fatty or to fibrous degeneration, according as the abnormal position produces tightness or looseness of their fibres. It is not enough, when conducting an autopsy, to observe a change; it is also necessary to distinguish between primary and secondary metamorphoses, and to know the difference between cause and effect.

A muscle, in strong and active, even exaggerated use, like the arm of a blacksmith, does not degenerate, but grows. Therefore the overworked serratus of one side, would (if we could make such an experiment) weigh more than the other. By this overaction the spine is twisted, the spinal muscles are thereby so placed that they in great measure, and after a time almost entirely, lose their normal action—they degenerate, therefore; those on

the convex side become fibrous, those on the concave fatty.

The preponderance of muscular action on one side of the body, which produces lateral curvature, is not an action morbid in itself, like a spastic or convulsive contraction (supposing that such action can exist in a chronic state at all), it is simply an overaction imposed upon the muscles by extrinsic conditions already discussed. It may arise—as, for instance, in dorsal curvature—from diminished action, that is, from some cause diminishing respiration on the one side, or from increased function on the other. When these circumstances have caused the vertebræ to rotate, and the spine to curve, certain changes in the column are produced; and it will be desirable to examine what those are, and the signs which should lead us to consider them remediable or the reverse.

Firstly, to elucidate what these changes are, I must, even at the risk of repetition, refer to the explanation which I have given of the curves induced by the erect posture in the straight infantile spine, and to the fact that these

normal antero-posterior curves are permitted by compression of the intervertebral substances, by tension and relaxation of opposed ligaments. This being the case, it must likewise be the fact that the normal lateral bending and rotation, such as I have measured and described, produce analogous compressions and tension of different parts. And again, when the lateral flexion and torsion begin to become morbid and fixed, can it be for a moment supposed that other conditions in the column itself, beyond those above mentioned, exist? At first, then, a spine affected with lateral curvature is by an extraneous force so placed that the intervertebral substances are compressed, the ligaments relaxed on the concave aspect, while on the convex face of the curve a contrary disposition prevails. This is positively all;* the column itself is normal, but is held in a certain posture by a force outside itself. We have never, or hardly ever, a chance in England of making a thorough examination after death of a spine in the first

* Cases of rickety spine are here excluded.

stages of lateral curvature. By the word thorough I mean such an examination as can permit us to compare bony with ligamentous and muscular change. To make this investigation, the column, together with some portions of the ribs, must necessarily be removed, and the parts rigidly measured. There are, it is true, in the various pathological museums of London, sundry specimens of curved spine, but nearly all these are rickety cases, and the others that I have seen are old bones, certainly not under forty years of age, and in which, therefore, the distortion must have lasted thirty years at least. Nevertheless, had these cases undergone the sort of scrutiny above indicated, some further information than that afforded by the dry skeleton would have been obtained. Some information, namely, such as that afforded by M. Cruveilhier, who examined a case of old and considerable distortion by careful measurement.

The curve extended from the 3rd to the 11th dorsal vertebra, and was so severe that the radius measured 189 millimètres, the aggregate thickness of these 9 bones was on the

convex side 222, on the concave 125 millimètres. The fibrocartilages measured on the convex side 65, on the other 45 millimètres. That is to say, that even in so old a case the bones had altered to only $\frac{1}{30}$ of their length, the cartilaginous discs to $\frac{1}{7}$. Moreover, the 9th, 10th, and 11th bones of the back were equally thick on their two sides, while on the convex sides the intervertebral cartilages were 28, on the other only 16 millimètres in depth ('*Bulletin de la Société Anatomique*, 1846.') This, with another case also quoted by Malgaigne, but from a journal to which I have no access ('*Journal de Maisonabe*'), is conclusive concerning the cartilaginous compression in this disease. It must be recollected that these measurements are taken from an old curve in a dead recumbent subject, in which the flaccid spine supports no weight, and on which the vital resiliency of ligamentous parts has disappeared. They represent, therefore, with regard to hard structures, the same difference; but with regard to soft ones, a less difference than during life.

Having thus proved that the bend and

torsion of a lateral curve is permitted by compression and tension of ligamentous parts, it becomes our duty to discover what amount, and what duration of curve will have been sufficient to deform these parts beyond their power of recovery. I know of no direct means whereby this question may be answered. A belief expressed at the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society,* that all lateral curvatures accompanied by rotation are incurable, affects only the choice of treatment. Nevertheless an indirect method of answering this question by estimating the normal resiliency of the intervertebral substance lies within our reach.

Herr Hirschfeld, of Prague, the first to doubt that the thickness of the vertebral bodies varies with the direction of the normal curves, goes further in his experiments. He cleared from a spine all the muscles, leaving the ligaments intact; then, by cutting through all the pedicles, separated the bodies. All the normal curves disappeared, the intervertebral

* 'The Lancet,' Nov. 20th, 1865.

substances increasing their thickness behind in the lumbar and cervical regions; in front in the dorsal, and decreasing on the opposite aspects.

I have not been able to discover the age of the subject in the above description, and therefore twice repeated for myself this troublesome experiment: once on a subject aged thirty-four; and again on one aged forty-three. Precisely the same result followed, nor could I find any difference between the two in the rapidity with which the spine became straight. Thus although in these cases the intervertebral cushions had been subject to compression on one side, and elongation on the other, during thirty-two and forty-one years respectively (I deduct two years for infancy previous to walking), yet these substances retained all their elasticity. Therefore a lateral curve also must have lasted a long time before those cushions lose their power of recovery.

We now may go on to the next point. I shall, when describing certain curative means, have occasion to speak of the influence of the

recumbent posture in annulling or diminishing lateral curvature; for some amelioration, except in very severe cases, is always produced by the prone position. Abnormal curves of moderate amount entirely disappear, while those of greater amount and older date are only ameliorated, and the oldest, sharpest curves may not perhaps be straightened at all. The amount of benefit in this posture will, at all events, represent the amount of resiliency left in the ligamentous portions of the spine. In the first class this is altogether unimpaired, and if we can remove the extrinsic restraining force the column will straighten itself. In the next class the diminished elasticity of ligamentous matter is such, that we must, besides reinstating the impaired muscular balance, apply certain force to supplement for a time the lost resiliency. In the third and more restricted class, all that we can do is to prevent the case getting worse—to relieve pain from pressure in abnormal directions, and in some few to obtain a certain, though probably a small, amount of improvement in form.

CHAPTER VI.

PRINCIPLES OF TREATMENT.

ANY person pointing out a better method of treating some disease, is bound to show wherein the old one is defective; and it therefore devolves upon me to demonstrate the theoretical and practical errors of the prevalent mode of treating lateral curvature. But if I state that by exclusive and special dealing with this disease its treatment has got into a vicious groove—if I direct attention, however strongly, to some of the points in orthopædic practice, which appear to me faulty and injurious—it must be permitted me once for all to say, that no personal ill-will whatever guides my pen. However badly I may think of this practice, and of the mode in which it is carried out, I entertain no other feeling than of all due professional respect

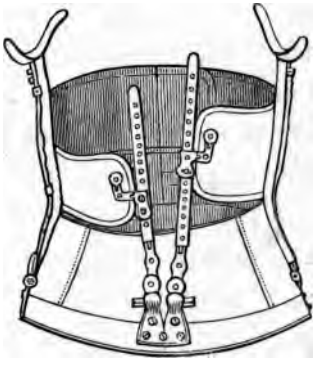
towards those gentlemen who practise a system from which I am conscientiously bound to differ.

The multitudinous theoretical errors, which have attributed the origin of lateral curvature to sundry causes already discussed, have naturally led to corresponding misdirection of treatment. This misdirection has in all its forms much the same tendency, since, whatever be the theory of causes, the proximate defect has always been attributed to the spinal bones, ligaments, or muscles, and the treatment, therefore, has been aimed at those organs. So exhaustive have been the devices employed, that if these were really the peccant parts, they must inevitably have yielded to some one or more of the vast powers brought to bear upon their evil influence. Sometimes, with the idea that these organs are too weak to support the body's weight, patients have been kept on their backs for years, the head and trunk have been upheld in slings and cages, they have been exercised by gymnastic performances. Sometimes supposed too strong, the muscles have been cut, or again stretched

by machines formed and used like gallows; also on couches—some of which act longitudinally, others by endeavouring to bend the back contrary to the curve. These devices, many of which are equally ingenious and complicated, possess every requisite for success, save any influence on the deforming cause; we therefore find that they have fallen into complete desuetude, except certain exercises occasionally employed, but still misdirected to the spinal muscles, and the use of certain machinery. Indeed, at the present time the treatment of this deformity is almost or entirely limited to the application, screwing and unscrewing of a mechanism termed a spinal support, which therefore requires some description before we proceed to consider its value or the reverse.

The instrument referred to is represented in the annexed figure, borrowed from an orthopædic work published a year or two ago. Its foundation consists of a steel band passing round the hips and abdomen, which carries two steel rods provided with crutch-handles, and also two movable levers bearing plates

of the same metal, that are to be placed on each side over the ribs. The object aimed at is this:—The patient is to be placed in the machine; the steel belt is fastened around the abdomen; the shoulders are strapped to the crutch handles; then, by a simple mechanism, these are lengthened so as to lift the shoulders, with the intention of extending the spine; furthermore, the movable levers are screwed so as to force the plates with a certain pressure against the protuberant parts of the ribs and loins.



A "Spinal Support."

The rounded parts about hip and buttocks alone afford, however, no sufficient means of fixing a band immovably, and unless the steel circle from which all these levers act be immovable or nearly so, the force of the screws, &c., will twist and displace the belt, but cannot affect the spine. To gain the necessary immobilisation, therefore, sundry swathings and

bandages must be added. One of these surmounts the metallic pelvic band, and, enclosing the loins, is tightly laced over the abdomen; while others, passing forward from the crutch-handled staves, are similarly fastened in front of the chest. This scaffolding aims at placing the individual in entire immobility as far as the trunk is concerned; any sideways movement, any bending forwards or backwards, any turning round, are to be rendered impossible; the figure must move all in one piece, like a Dutch doll. This, I say, is the object aimed at, and which, if the instrument is to have influence on the spine, must be attained; fortunately, however, for the well-being of the patients it is pretty nearly impossible to arrive at this end, as any one who has endeavoured to hold the trunk even of a baby still, is aware. Thus the immense power and flexibility of the figure soon causes this or that steel rod to yield in one or the other direction, giving the body sufficient liberty to make life endurable, and to negative the supposed influence of the levers on the spine. The instrument then simply resem-

bles heavy stays of an exceptionally unwholesome construction.

For there is another portion of this machinery which does not yield: the tight swathings above described, although they may slip up or down enough to let the scaffolding rods give, encircle the abdomen and effectually check its respiratory movements. But we have already seen (p. 39) that anything which by preventing the breathing movements of the belly, forces that function to be unduly pectoral, is in itself an efficient cause of dorsal curvature.

The instrument therefore absolutely increases the root of the evil, not only by the abdominal constriction, but by the belt over the chest, which presses back the ribs chiefly, of course, on the side of the largest lung—the right. Such confinement and such compression of important organs have their natural effect, and few girls emerge from such treatment without considerable loss of health; and in cases where even slight predisposition exists, consumption is induced, as many physicians in London are aware. Nevertheless, I must

in justice say that in a certain very small percentage of cases these mechanisms have effected some good. Such cases belong to the class of weight-bearing curves, and they have been benefited by relieving the spine of the weight of that shoulder which lies on its convex side. Such object can, however, be effected by a far simpler method, which does not imprison the trunk at all, as I shall hereafter show.

Lest it be imagined that I am unjust towards this mechanism in asserting that it benefits only a very small percentage of cases, and lest my testimony concerning an instrument which I never use be considered valueless, I will here sum up shortly the experience of those who do use them, and who would certainly be disposed to give the most favourable view of their value. Dr. Little says:*—"They are not adapted to the removal of the primary causes of lateral curvature; they cannot, therefore, be employed as curative means." And, in a very recent work,†—"Notwith-

* 'On Deformities of the Human Spine,' p. 379.

† 'On Spinal Weakness and Spinal Curvature,' p. 65.

standing all that has been said or written in relation to lateral curvature and spinal supports, no spinal apparatus or support hitherto designed is able to overcome rotation of the spine." Mr. Tamplin and Mr. Brodhurst both eulogise these scaffoldings; but it is difficult to find what results they gain, or expect to gain, from their use. Mr. Adams, whose treatise on the subject is more exhaustive, says:*—"I have no hesitation in expressing my conviction that if these cases be submitted to treatment before any very obvious external deformity has occurred, they are generally curable within one or two years. In some instances, especially if an hereditary tendency to spinal curvature exist, and the girl is of feeble constitutional power, a longer period may be required." Which appears to mean that if a strong young girl of healthy parentage be fastened up in one of these machines for two years, she may be cured in that period of a deformity which can hardly be said to exist. A further insight is afforded

* 'Lectures on Curvature of the Spine,' p. 326.

by the expressions of two of the above-named gentlemen at the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society meeting of January 9th, 1866:* —"The result of my experience has been to convince me that where lateral curvature existed in any marked degree, and before it amounted to an external deformity, it is essentially an incurable affection" (Mr. Adams). "When rotation has taken place" (the *primum mobile* of the deviation), "appliances are useless." The causes of so sad an experience require some comment. A malady may be non-amenable to treatment, from positive incurability, or from impropriety of measures taken. Now, firstly, it would be very unwise to conclude that a malady is incurable if a certain application had done no good, but probably some harm. Secondly, it seems *primâ facie* absurd to affirm that a slight deviation of form in a young person is incurable. Thirdly, the result of my experience leads to a very different conclusion.

Another device, spinal myotomy—already

* Vide 'The Lancet' of Jan. 23rd, 1866.

justly condemned and dead,—will here require no further notice or mention at my hands.

The plan of treatment which I have pursued for some years, and which I am about to describe, differs from the prevalent method of Orthopædy in several very essential principles. The latter, by preventing normal breathing, adds to the causes of deformity, and it immobilizes the trunk as far as it possibly can, thus debilitating the spinal muscles, which, after all, must uphold the column. The former is adapted to strengthen the weakened muscles, to prevent undue pectoral breathing, or, at least, to obviate its injurious effects. Thus, for both forms of curvature described in foregoing chapters, the treatment resolves itself into three portions—viz., support, position, and exercise. The two last divisions might strictly be classified together, since every remedial position, necessitating activity of certain muscles, is in truth an exercise; nevertheless, it will be more convenient for our purpose to retain the classification as above, premising only that by position I mean the ordinance of a certain immoving pos-

ture; by exercise certain movements are denoted.

Regarding supports, which must be of different forms in varying cases, it will be desirable to say a few words which apply to them all. In the first place, they must never be rigid: to fix immovably for an indefinite time a portion of the body, which is intended by nature to be mobile, at first weakens and subsequently destroys muscular power—that power, namely, on which we must rely, at the end of treatment, for the maintenance of an erect posture. In the next place, the direction in which the force is to act must be considered; and, to do this fairly, I must again revert to the change produced in a lateral curve by recumbency. In my earlier studies of lateral curvature I was much struck by the fact, that in commencing cases the curve vanishes when the patient lies down. In a later stage the curvature, though greatly diminishing, does not entirely disappear. I tried, therefore, in these latter cases, to increase the effect of posture by longitudinal traction. Instantly the curves were aggra-

vated: no matter how gradual or how sudden was the force employed, it always increased the curves according to its amount. I then tried the same expedient in cases in which the morbid posture was entirely annulled by position; and in these, when traction was made, the curve reappeared. This was equally the case, whether the upward or counter-extension was made from the head and neck, or from the shoulders and upper part of the chest. I then perceived this fact,—that recumbency, while it obviates the lateral bend, does not affect rotation; or, to make this phrase easier, by expansion, I would say:—On a rotated spine the erectores spinæ act in a lateral direction (since they turn with the bones), and bend the column sideways. In the erect posture those muscles are in full action, and the deviation, therefore, well marked. In the prone position the organs are at rest, and the lateral curve ceases: rotation, however, being dependent on other causes, still continues. All muscles, however, are excited by stretching; so, when in recumbency traction is employed, the erectors contract and reproduce the curve.

Hence, to use force in the longitudinal direction, with the hope of straightening the spine, is a physiological and mechanical blunder.

Let us return to the curves which only partially disappear during recumbency. Force upwards and downwards—*i. e.*, in the direction of the crutch-handles in orthopædic instruments, aggravates the curve; but the effect of force at right angles to the spine is quite different: no muscular effort is excited thereby,—hence very little power, save in old cases, will straighten the column. Indeed, when a patient with curvature stands before the surgeon, he instinctively places a hand on each side at the greatest point of deviation, and, by pressing in opposite directions, finds that, according to the severity of the case, he can entirely or partially restore the straight line of the spine. The bandage which I use is contrived simply to render permanent, by an elastic force, the office which the surgeon's hands can only temporarily fulfil.

With regard to the other two items of treatment, I would only remark that, to devise exercise for any deformity, the origin-

ator will act upon his views of the causes of disease, and of the actions which he thinks most calculated to obviate them. In following out this sort of work, he finds certain methods fail to call forth the power he intended, or they may not only act as he calculated, but evoke also other and unexpected forces, which subvert the object in view, so that modification or abandonment of some cherished design becomes necessary. The actions and powers of a machine are easily reckoned—a certain force, a given number, and size of cogs or levers, and the result is certain; but nothing is more subtle or varied than the acts of the human body. I have found not unfrequently that a position maintained by certain muscles will, after a time, when fatigue has come on suddenly, leave those parts at rest, and with an almost imperceptible change of posture, will employ for a short period another, or rather a number of other sets. So also, in different persons, there is some appreciable but indescribable difference in the mode of muscular action, so that the one is best fitted by exercise or posture in a certain position,

another requires some slight variation. But in all this part of my method, as well as in the construction of the bandage, it has been my desire to make the treatment "direct." The most important postures which I shall describe, the respiratory and lumbar exercises, the bandage and arm support, are calculated on that principle. They are aimed straight at the mark they are intended to hit, and in my experience the shafts fly true; yet, before describing the detail of my method, it will be well to mention an example of what I mean by the term "directness of treatment," only premising that no established curve can be so easily cured; the case simply illustrates the advantages of an attack upon the cause of curvature.

Miss A. W——, aged nineteen, had long been the subject of strumous inflammation of the left knee, which occasionally had brought her under the threat of amputation. When I saw her in January, 1861, the swollen joint was discharging by three sinuses, from which small particles of bone had frequently come. In eighteen months she was able to walk with the aid of a stick. After an interval of two years, on seeing her again, I observed that the lumbar spine was crooked, though she wore a thicker boot on the left foot. This

curve continued while she sat on a level seat, and only partially disappeared when she lay down. Seeing that she walked and stood a great deal, and that the obliquity of the pelvis caused the spinal curve, I wished to counteract this effect by placing her while sitting in such a position as should reverse this obliquity. I carefully measured the difference in length between the two limbs, and caused a cushion to be made of such wedge-shaped form as should, when she sat upon it, lift the right side of the pelvis to the same extent as it was depressed in standing. This, of course, reversed the pelvic obliquity, and in time caused the spine to curve while she was seated in the contrary direction. This means and a bandage, to be hereafter described, sufficed to annul the lateral curvature.

CHAPTER VII.

TREATMENT OF LUMBAR CURVE.

In stating, at the end of the last chapter, that a spinal curvature cannot be cured simply by making a patient sit for some time on a sloping seat, it was, in fact, merely asserted that this, like other diseases, must be treated with reference to its severity and cause. For this reason, much pains has been taken to define the essential causality of each class of curvature; and it must be permitted me here to recall these facts, that while each class of primary dorsal curvature is always followed by a lumbar curve, so a curve primarily lumbar calls forth a dorsal arc in the contrary direction, the bend thus produced by the primary one being in each case called secondary or compensating. In all these maladies it is desirable to obtain the earliest symptoms indica-

tive of the disease; and I would remind the reader that in lumbar curvature a peculiar backward projection of one side of the pelvis is earlier than its lateral projection—earlier also than lateral deviation; but contemporary, or only slightly preceding, an amount of rotation which the practised hand can detect.

This prominence marks the causality of the disease which we have traced to some changed posture of pelvis and thighs. The direct and natural plan of treatment will therefore most evidently be to correct these faulty conditions; and no doubt, if we could always encounter the malady in its earliest stages, such treatment would in itself prove efficacious, as in the case related in the previous chapter. The fact is, however, that the distortion rarely comes under skilled observation in the earlier part of its course; and thus we have to encounter, besides mere habit and the influence of superincumbent weight, passive shortening of certain muscles, debility of others, and, in tolerably advanced cases, contraction of ligaments. Sufficient and commensurate treatment for an established curve will

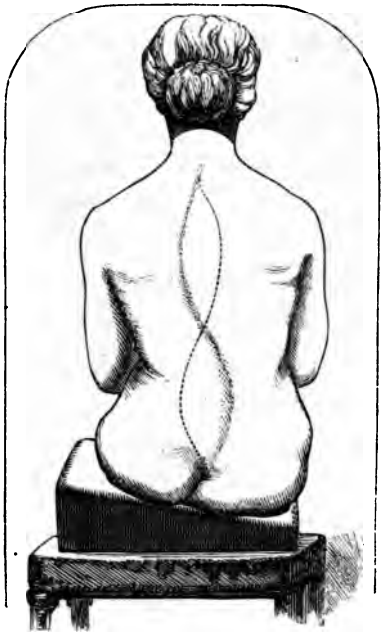
naturally include the divisions of treatment already discussed, which are destined to counteract those different defects.

Firstly, it is of the utmost importance to place the patient at ease; and while conversing, or asking questions concerning health or age, &c., to watch the posture assumed, to observe the position of the feet, or the mode of sitting, whether cross-legged on one side, &c., to get at the habits and occupations, and to conclude, as far as possible, what circumstances in the daily life have given rise to that posture of the lower parts of the body which may have called forth the deformity. Although these may sometimes escape investigation, yet careful study will very frequently lead to the detection of the injurious habit, and this, of course, must be at once attacked.

Our first curative means, namely position,* is represented chiefly by the sloping seat—a device for lifting that side of the pelvis which is abnormally depressed, whose action may be

* It may be as well to repeat that all remedial position implies to a considerable extent exercise of those muscles which in the malposture are unused.

thus explained. The accompanying engraving is taken from one of my patients who had



The Sloping Seat.

all but recovered from a rather severe lumbar curve, represented by the dotted line. The figure is placed upon a seat, which slopes from left to right, *i. e.*, from the convex to the concave side; and it is from this figure evident that, if we artificially lift the part of the

pelvis which lies to the convex side, the spine, forced by the law of balance, will tend to assume a curve in the contrary direction. The reader also will aid his comprehension of this condition if he will look back to p. 50, at the diagram which represents the undulations of the column in a figure rocking from side to side. The block in the above engraving upon which the torso is seated hardly represents, however, the mechanism by which I work in these cases. I have a stool with a top, which, lying horizontal, can be raised at one end, by means of a winch and cogged wheels, so gradually that the changes in the position of the spine and the action of the muscles can, during the elevation, be accurately observed. Now, when the patient sits on this stool, with the feet stretched out in front so that they do not influence the trunk, and when the end on the convex side is slowly lifted, one observes the following changes:—firstly, and previous to any perceptible change in the lateral bend, the lumbar vertebræ begin to relinquish their torsion, to untwist themselves; the parts on the convex side become less hard, those on the

concave more so, and the transverse processes sink deeper—are not so evident; the lateral inflexion then also becomes affected, and in all but severe cases it will disappear at the same time that the torsion ceases. I have, however, in a previous sentence, used the phrase, "the spine *tends* to assume a contrary curve," because I would guard against any appearance of exaggeration; therefore I must not be supposed to say that an established lumbar curve can be at once inverted by such means, or even that it will be immediately effaced. An evident and manifest improvement is, however, while the figure is sitting, instantly produced, and as the back becomes stronger, the patient can use the device for longer periods, so as to keep the spine in a more normal, and at last, with the assistance of other means, in a perfectly normal position during the greater part of the day.

Simple as the device appears, its efficacy is very considerable; indeed although, when I first began to employ this mechanism on deformed patients, there were many reasons to expect very considerable advantage from its

use, I was not prepared for the amount of change induced: nevertheless its regulation requires considerable care; indeed, there are few things in practice more difficult than to fix the degree of slope, and the time of employment which will be beneficial.

By means of the contrivance for regulating the angle of inclination without obliging the patient to rise or use any unnecessary muscular effort, one can, however, arrive at a very accurate judgment of the amount of force expended on the spine, and the action of the lumbar muscles during the elevation of one side must be carefully watched; I would also point out that it is partly the diminishing torsion in the lumbar, the primary curve, and partly the behaviour of the dorsal (secondary) curvature, which must serve as an index. The secondary curve is thus available, because since it is consecutive it is also less indelible, and because the longer sweep of the arc renders such change more appreciable. While we bear in mind that a slight degree of slope will produce little or no benefit, a violent inclination, or too long

a period of use, may be productive of very considerable evil.

Emma T——, aged seventeen years and a half, came to me on Feb. 16th, 1863. She is employed at a sewing machine, which she always drives with the right foot; is strongly built, but now pale, and evidently out of health, suffering from profuse leucorrhœa. On examining the back I found a considerable primary lumbar curve to the right, with a secondary dorsal curvature, both of which only partially disappeared on lying down. Seeing the depressed state of health, I only ordered tonics, with similar regimen, and certain recommendations about the mode of working.

March 2nd.—Better. Finds great difficulty in working with the left foot, and it is often impossible to do so. I ordered a sloping seat, being very careful to fix both the angle and the time of use small, on account of state of health; also ordered a bandage as hereafter described.

April 2nd.—Up to the middle of the month considerable improvement had taken place, and I had simply advised continuation of the same course. At the above date, however, she was looking very ill, and complained of severe pains in the back and loins. I found that her cousin, seeing the improvement produced by gentle means, had counselled her to have the slope made higher (nearly doubled) and to use it the chief part of the day. On examination, I found the back less well; the muscles on the right of the spine were swollen and tender to the touch; the loins so weak that she could with difficulty sit or stand upright.

She was ordered to leave off the sloping seat; the bandage was tightened; and the cousin was shown how to rub the muscles upwards with a liniment of ammonia, chloroform, and opium.

May 7th.—As the patient had now quite recovered from the pain and weakness, the use of the sloping seat was cautiously resumed; and from this time the case went on uninterruptedly till I discharged her from care, quite straight, on Dec. 16th, 1863.

Such device can, from its very nature, only be used while sitting; hence, when the back becomes more straight, and the lumbar muscles on the concave side sufficiently strong, we may carry on the same principle in the standing posture by ordering an additional sole of cork to one boot, *i. e.*, that on the convex side of the curve. For the first day or two the patient finds this awkward, but very soon becomes accustomed to it. Nevertheless, I only use it in severe cases, and for those patients whose power is good and health confirmed.

Exercise is in a great measure included in the position enforced by the sloping seat and the high shoe; but we may advantageously add to these certain calisthenics destined more especially to increase the power of the muscles

at the lower part of the spine, on the concave side of the spine. Space forbids my entering very fully into details; I will simply mention those which I have found most advantageous. Let the lumbar curve be to the left: the patient, with both knees perfectly straight, stands on a block or book from one to three inches high, as the case may demand, and with the right foot so close to the edge of the block that, by just separating the limbs, the sole passes over the border. Still keeping the knees quite straight, the right foot is by action at the hips made to sink till its sole rests fairly on the ground for a short period, both knees being kept straight; then it is replaced on the book, and this manœuvre is repeated for a prescribed time, and at a certain rate. A chair is placed against the wall, the patient standing sideways to the wall, balances herself with the left hand upon it, and planting the left foot on the chair, slowly lifts herself until she stands upright. Standing with her back to the wall, the patient slowly lifts the left knee forward till the thigh is at right angles to the body, and gradually lets the limb fall

again, repeating this movement slowly and rhythmically. After a time the foot is to be weighted according to the strength of the patient.

An exercise very valuable in long-standing and severe cases, for stretching ligaments on the concave side of the spine, is the following. The patient stands with the back to the wall, and, if possible, with the left side against the corner wall, or some upright piece of furniture, as a piano or bookcase, so that she may be sure of not deviating from the perpendicular to that side. A block, of carefully-proportioned thickness, is placed under the right foot. Fixing the right arm a-kimbo, she quickly and forcibly (according to her strength) bends the upper part of the body sideways to the right, and repeats this several times. The back must be kept against the wall, the knees kept rigidly straight, and if the limbs be rather weak, or the patient awkward, a napkin or round towel passed round the hips, and secured to the wall on her left, must uphold the due position of the pelvis.

These are the more important among the exercises which I employ. They are to be used with great caution, and from time to time the surgeon must watch them, lest any awkward trick in their performance render them useless or injurious.

It is necessary to warn the reader against ordering any of these exercises, indeed any part of the treatment, lightly or incautiously. Simple as they may seem—indeed are,—they are also *direct*, and as a force applied directly is the more potent in proportion to this quality, so, if improperly employed, its power for evil will be great.

The form of support which I use in this description of curve is founded on the principle of using force as nearly as possible in the direction of the radii of the curves. The annexed figure shows a lumbar curve to the right, together with the simplest form of bandage. A round well-covered strap, about the size of the little finger, passing round the upper part of the thigh, supports on the hip a triangular pad strapped to the part; from the two upper angles a well-fitting piece of some

strong material passes round the loins. This portion becomes broader, so that its greatest breadth is over the most prominent part of the curve; from that point as it passes round in front it tapers again. In the view as given, no fastening or other contrivance is visible, but in front the band is rendered elastic by the insertion of a strong india-rubber ring, and here, too, is added a means of fastening, as well as an arrangement whereby the surgeon can himself fix and vary the degree of tension without leaving it to the hap-hazard will of the patient. The object of keeping all the elastic force in front is this, that, while it perfectly allows all desirable movements of the body, the power supporting and upholding the lumbar curvature acts from right to left, and aids in obviating the morbid torsion of vertebræ in the contrary direction. However, when the curvature is extreme, or where, as happens in rare cases, torsion is not commensurate with the lateral curve, I insert elastic power behind also. If the secondary curve be well marked, and does not disappear when the patient lies

down, if the patient be muscularly weak, or if the part of the bandage just described have a

The simplest form of support is marked in white, the additional portion (generally required) by dotted lines.

tendency to slip, the other portion (marked in dotted lines) must be added. This simply consists of a band (supplied with the same

elastic force and means of securing the proper tension) passing to a pad opposite the most prominent part of the dorsal curve, and supplied with a shoulder-strap to avoid slipping. The mode in which this latter part is arranged varies in different cases, according to the slope of the shoulders, position and size of mammæ, &c.

The advantages which such support possesses over steel instruments are, lightness, the absence of absolute restraint, and the direction of the force being transverse to the chord of curve. The round form of the band at the top of the thigh prevents any cutting, and the fact that the force is exerted upon it at right angles to its direction causes the tension on that part to be very slight.

These broad principles must suffice as the guides of treatment. One exercise will be found most applicable in one case, while another may be found suitable to a different patient, and what is advisable in one stage is not useful in another. I do not know that I can give any certain guide to choice; and, although a considerable experience enables

me now to judge what will be most available, I always let the movement be performed in my presence, under careful supervision. It is, however, well always to prescribe the less powerful exercises for weak persons, and in the weakest to leave all muscular exertion out of the question, and work by position and support alone. The advantage of this plan will be seen in some of the cases detailed.

As a matter of prognosis it is well to be aware that the curves primarily lumbar are more obstinate, *i. e.*, require a longer time for cure than the same amount of dorsal curvature; but that unless far advanced, and especially if evil habits of position and wrong modes of taking exercise be avoided, they belong essentially to the category of curable disease.

Miss E. C., aged 22, came to me May 5th, 1866, with a well marked spinal curve, which was only suspected, however, a few weeks ago. She now suffers considerable pain in the lower part of the left chest and lumbar region; for this she underwent treatment directed to the digestive organs, and thinks that she was much weakened thereby. During the last year her health has failed; she has dysmenorrhœa, faulty

appetite, and sleeps badly; is pale and exsanguineous.

I found that there was considerable spinal deviation, with retrocession of and lateral projection of the back part of the pelvis; a compensating curve had formed in the dorsal region. A plumb-line, dropped from 7th cervical vertebra, crossed the S-shaped curve between the 9th and 10th dorsal vertebræ; the 2nd lumbar spinous process lay 1 inch four lines to the left of this line, the 5th dorsal ¾ inch to the right. The left transverse processes of the loins formed easily-felt prominences, while a hollow lay on the right side of the loins. The patient being so far out of health, it seemed to me desirable to proceed very gently; I therefore simply ordered her to sit on a seat sloping 1½ inch in the foot, for a quarter of an hour twice a day, and after this to repose on the couch for an equal space. Tonics of steel and some aloes were prescribed.

May 14th.—There is a certain small improvement; a support, such as described in the text, was adapted, at but a small degree of tension.

June 1st.—At a previous visit the tension of the bandage was increased, and the use of the seat ordered for thrice in the day. Her health is now better; she has all but lost the pains complained of, and the complexion is less bloodless; appetite is also improved.

June 28th.—The health has manifestly improved. The curvature now has the following measurements:—2nd lumbar 1 inch, 5th dorsal ½ inch from mesial line. —To continue with a rather tighter bandage.

July 14th.—The back continues to improve, and the

patient has gained strength considerably.—Ordered to have a boot $\frac{1}{3}$ inch higher on the left than on the right side.

Sept. 10th.—The patient, seen occasionally during the interval, has continued with these ordonnances; has greatly improved, so much so that the straight line of silk between 7th cervical vertebra and middle of sacrum lies over all the spinous processes—but in the loins they only skirt the right side, in the back the left side of those projections. Rotation is still marked enough to enable one just to feel the left lumbar transverse process. The lady considers herself well, and it is only my insistance which causes her to continue under treatment.

Dec. 17th.—I now also consider this patient well, since I can detect no lateral deviation, no sign of rotation, and the parts are equally hard on both sides of the spine. She also can turn her body equally to both sides, as shewn by the rotation measurer.

June 10th, 1867.—This patient wished to see me again previous to a projected marriage; I examined the back, and still found no deviation whatever.

Alice B——, a short, but strongly built and muscular girl, aged 17, was brought to me with a sharp and well-defined lumbar curve to the right, Nov., 1865.

The backward projection of the right sacro-iliac joint was particularly well marked—the rotation at the loins strong, while the curve itself was sharper and more defined than usual. On watching the positions which the patient assumed, I found that she, in walking and standing, turned the right knee and foot a

good deal in; and on a subsequent visit, as I gave her some portion of bandage to stitch, I observed that as she sat to work she threw the left leg well across the right, and leaned her left elbow on the thigh of that side. She was a shoe-binder, and worked in this attitude a good number of hours daily.

I explained the absolute necessity of changing this posture; ordered a sloping seat, highest on the right side, to be used only a short time, thrice in the day, namely, at meals. By degrees the time of its use was increased, until she was able to work upon it while sitting, and very shortly after a strong lumbar bandage was employed.

This case improved rapidly in the first two months of treatment, during the greater part of which she had discontinued her employment. After that interval, and during a period of three months, the progress became slower, and she lost health to a certain degree. I took her into hospital, April, 1866, and had her exercises and the posture of sitting properly superintended. I also had her right boot heightened by a piece of cork half an inch thick.

July 30th, 1866.—The case had now very much improved, and as another employment—domestic service—has been found for the girl, I have dismissed her from the hospital; in the mean time she has been cured of her awkward tricks of sitting and walking, and the back, while the bandage is *in situ*, is not far from straight.

Oct. 5th.—This patient has been seen about every fortnight, and the back has been improving. Occasionally a certain amount of the cork has been cut from

the sole, and for the last three weeks the boots have been of equal thickness.

The back is now quite straight, the girl stands well upright on the two feet, and the parts on each side of the spinous processes are equally hard and protuberant.

Miss L——, aged 24, has for some time been suffering from a curvature of the spine, and has worn for more than four years the usual form of orthopædic support. She came to me on the 5th May, 1866, and gave the following history.

About five years ago, she, being previously well and hearty, began to lose health, and suffered pain in the back; these symptoms increased, menstruation became irregular, and all but ceased; appetite failed, breathing became short and difficult. She was taken to a practitioner near her residence, and he, in examining her, found signs of curvature, and sent her to London in 1861. The gentleman whom she consulted told her that she must remain some considerable time in town, and wear an iron support. She did remain the greater part of a year in London; during which time the instrument was screwed up, at first thrice, then twice a week, and afterwards once a week. At the end of rather more than ten months she found herself unable to stay longer, or to afford further treatment. The instrument was very much tightened, so as to last longer without alteration, and she left London. At that time she was suffering more pain in the back; her health was much broken, and she was, when the instrument was removed, more crooked, although she

says that when the scaffolding was tightly screwed she was a little taller. She had, however, lost health more rapidly; had become very thin; was very easily wearied; scarcely able to walk; her appetite was very small, and somewhat capricious; she suffered also considerable pain, chiefly on the right side. She continued to wear the instrument for some time, in the country; but after a little more than two months her strength so failed that she was obliged to take almost entirely to bed and the sofa, leaving off the scaffolding. Her health now began to improve again, and as she shortly was enabled to get about, she became again desirous of improving the shape of the spine, and resumed the support, but found again that her health failed, and was obliged to discontinue it. After six weeks more she consulted me.

At the date above given, I found her pale and weak; she could not sit up for more than a few minutes at a time; appetite bad and capricious; pulse small; menstruation irregular and scanty.

The following measurements give the curvature of the spine. A silk thread between the 7th cervical vertebra and the middle of the sacrum crossed exactly over the 9th dorsal spinous process. The second lumbar spine was $1\frac{1}{8}$ inch to the right, the 5th dorsal was $\frac{6}{8}$ inch to the left. When she lay down the curve decreased.

In this case it was, I felt, necessary to be very cautious in the application of any treatment. I ordered therefore at first a seat, sloping only $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch in 15, for ten minutes twice in the day, and to rest on the back immediately afterwards, and to take steel wine twice a day—a steel and aloes pill night and morning.

May 18th —She is better in health ; the back has, of course, hardly altered, but the hardness and protuberance of parts on the right of the spine are rather less marked. A bandage has been constructed, and this was now applied with but little tension; to continue the sloping seat.

June 12th.—The health has decidedly improved, and the patient has gained flesh with rather remarkable rapidity: the back also is better, the improvement being chiefly manifest by the decreasing rotation, as seen in the greater equality of hardness on each side of the spine.

July 20th.—In the three or four visits since the former date there has only been to observe the gradual improvement in health and in the form of the back: a higher slope to the seat was instituted a fortnight ago ; the tension of the bandage has been two or three times re-arranged. The deviation was to-day carefully measured: 2nd lumbar spine $\frac{6}{8}$ inch to right, 5th dorsal $\frac{1}{4}$ to left. We have then gained $\frac{3}{8}$ on the lumbar (primary) curve, $\frac{1}{2}$ inch on the dorsal secondary curve. This, I may remark, is not uncommonly the case; the secondary curve yields first and most.

August 28th.—Again I leave an interval in which there is nothing especial to remark; improvement during that time has been however more rapid. Health is now very good. Menstruation has occurred with perfect regularity in the last three periods. She has sufficient colour and plumpness; appetite good. Measurement gives the following result :—the 2nd lumbar spine lies so that the straight line is $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from its left border, and touches the right edge of the 5th dorsal vertebra.

Oct. 2nd.—The patient may now be considered well. The line of silk touches all the vertebræ; no transverse processes can be felt, but the parts on each side are equal in hardness and resiliency.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE TREATMENT OF DORSAL CURVATURE.

THE curvatures primarily dorsal form the larger, the more important class of this deformity; and, before considering their treatment, I must beg leave to remind the reader that in these forms of distortion torsion is the first step, and that this is produced by preponderance of one serratus magnus over the other. At this point the subject divides itself into two; the preponderance is produced either by overweighting one arm or by excessively pectoral breathing, which chiefly affects the side of the largest lung, namely, the right.

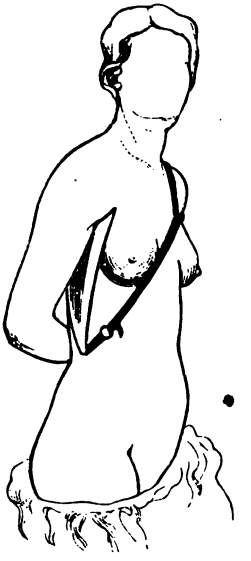
Since, then, it is an essential part of the principles advocated in this as in other of my works, to determine the causes in each case, and to treat the malady in accordance with such cause, it is evident that in both classes

of the disease we must proceed by making the muscle on the convex side act less, that on the concave more; but since in each division the sort of work is different, so must the means taken to regulate its amount vary.

Let us first take the class of dorsal deformity originating in weight-bearing. These cases are chiefly met with among the working classes, and hence some difficulty in enforcing those alterations of habits and that attention to directions necessary for recovery. Nevertheless, much can be effected; and I have succeeded in curing many cases occurring in careful, well-conducted families, of this order. In the first place, it is necessary either to relieve the patient of the work, which produced the distortion, or to alter the mode of its performance. This work is generally carrying an infant or other burden: even long-continued sewing will produce slight curvature.* However we may wish to

* The mere movement of arm and forearm has, of course, nothing to do with the production of curvature. In all manipulations requiring evenness and uniformity of action, some part is kept fixed as a *point d'appui*. Those who have watched women at the needle

alter the mode of carrying burdens, it does not answer, save in the earliest stages, merely to tell a girl to use the other hand. I have, indeed, seen curves already well marked rendered worse by such ready and rather rough expedient. It is certainly best of all that the work cease for a time; next best, that the burden be supported on each hand alternately. It is not at the moment when all the body is braced to perform some act of strength that the mischief is done, but in the longer lapse of duller work, when the antagonist muscles, or those that fix the points of



The Shoulder-sling for weight-bearing curves in early stage. The triangular part under the arm consists of a support whose upper side is elastic and soft. The belt portion is rendered elastic by the insertion of strong india-rubber rings.

will have observed that while the arm and forearm are allowed free play, the shoulder and blade-bone are held peculiarly still: this fixity, being produced almost entirely by the serratus, has its effect on the spine.

but the earlier stages, it is necessary to produce also another effect, this sling is to be combined generally with a support which I have termed the "oblique bandage." The object of this latter band is to uphold the sides of the chest and spine; but, as it will be described immediately, I will now merely mention it as a band also to be used in this form.

The points regarding position to be especially noted are these:—The patient should be induced to carry the right arm with the elbow a little in front of the body. A convenient and not an inelegant posture is insured by placing the hand on the left side at the waist. The left elbow and shoulder should be habitually thrown rather back. In sleeping, the patient should be encouraged, whatever posture the body may assume, to keep the right hand on the left shoulder or left side of the neck. The left arm, if the posture be not uneasy, should lie behind the body. The woodcut upon p. 109 shows the action on the spine of the sloping seat; and it is to be observed that although this agent was

especially designed for lumbar curves, yet its action does not stop at the loins, but affects also the back, and is of great value in all forms of dorsal curve; on this subject more must be said in the future.

The exercises to be used in the weight-bearing curve require very careful application, because there are certain points to be considered which I have till now purposely postponed. It is evident that if a weight have produced upon its support a certain effect, that consequence may arise from the excess of weight (either in mass or in time), or from the weakness of the support itself. In practice both these forms of case present themselves to our notice; and, besides, there is a third variety: the support, originally strong, has been injured, and the strength has for the time disappeared. In each one of these classes we must arrange differently our mode of using exercises, and their intensity; in the stronger and the rarer form, we may employ them immediately after having by the above-described devices produced some effect upon the curves, and straightened them

to some extent. In the cases originally weak the work must be very gradually and lightly applied; in those which have acquired debility, exercise—even the sloping seat—must be avoided until a considerable improvement in health has been obtained.

The exercises are chiefly directed to the left scapula. Firstly, after, by the other means described, a certain improvement has been effected, and if the amount of debility do not forbid, we may weight the left arm slightly. This may be done in any way; a piece of plumbers' lead, properly protected, squeezed on above the elbow, is a convenient plan. Let the patient stand in the position of a soldier at "attention," with the right side against the wall; then slowly lift the left hand and arm, at the same time throwing the head back; * or simply, in the same position, with the neck well bent back, let her only lift

* The throwing back of the head recommended in this and the following exercises, is prescribed in order to obviate action of the *trapezius* in lifting the shoulders, and to throw the whole burden of that movement on the *serratus magnus*.

the left shoulder several times. A stronger exercise is to raise the left arm slowly from the side until it forms a right angle with the body, the head being well bent back. Again, to swing the left arm strongly backwards and forwards nearly at right angles to the body, the hand pronated in front and supinated behind; when the patient is strong enough, a weight may be placed in the hand. The influence on the ribs and spine of the two last exercises will be much increased by the following device. A hook or staple on the patient's left holds an accumulator attached to a handle grasped by the patient on the right, with her arm passing in front of her body, so that the force draws the hand well over to the left side.

If the weight-bearing curve be in the opposite direction, all these manœuvres must be reversed; they are not to be used lightly nor indiscriminately, and must be from time to time rigidly watched.

The other form of dorsal deformity is far more common, especially in the upper classes of society, and when the surgeon has made so

accurate a diagnosis that he is sure of having to do with a respiratory curve, he will be aware that his treatment must be directed to combating exaggerated pectoral breathing, and the backward tendency of the right ribs. However early, however advanced the case, this must be one of his aims; indeed, if in the earliest stages of the malady he could insure these results, he would have done enough; but the deformity usually comes under care in a further advanced condition, and it is necessary, therefore, that he add means to obviate lateral deviation and to restore normal position.

In the first place, it is very important that the arrangement of dress should be conformable to health and functional activity. It is the duty of the surgeon to examine carefully into this point; nor should he rest satisfied with a mere assurance that nothing tight is worn. Let him rather not think it derogatory to see the sort of corset which the patient affects, particularly the hardness and resistance of that part which overlies the abdomen; let him, too, observe the amount of constriction produced by petticoat-strings, also the weight

of the clothing. This is frequently considerable, especially in the colder months, when breathing, being more rapid, should be less constrained, but when the mere pressure by gravity on the abdomen renders respiration too pectoral. In cases where the curve is rapidly increasing, part of this weight may be suspended from the left shoulder, by means of an arrangement something after the fashion of braces. This can be managed without any difficulty, and I have in some cases seen considerable improvement follow such change.

The positions to be enforced in this form of curvature are aimed at two objects,—the retrocession of ribs and the lateral deviation. I have, in speaking of weight-bearing curvature, described certain postures. They are such as by bringing forward the base of the right scapula, tend to prevent overaction of that serratus on the ribs, and to increase the vantage ground for such influence of the left muscle—all attitudes which bring the right elbow in front of the body, the left behind, are desirable—the patient should be encouraged to acquire as a habit, in walking and standing,

to keep the right hand on the left side of the waist. In sitting, she may advantageously let the arm cross still further, so that the hand rests over the left thigh. In sleeping she should lie on the right side, a small cushion should be placed under the axilla, the right arm, brought well forward, should be over the left shoulder or left side of the neck, while the left arm should if possible lie behind the body. Let none, till he has tried them, consider these matters trivial; the force at any given moment of a single drop of water may be small, but let one fall at every instant, and the aggregate effect will soon be quite sufficiently marked. Of the postures used to obviate the lateral deviation the first and most important is again the sloping seat. I would beg the reader to refer back to p. 109, on which is the figure representing the action of this device. It will there be seen that though it was designed originally for cases of lumbar curve, yet its action does not stop at the loins, but is continued upward to the dorsal spine. When a patient is placed upon the mechanical stool, with the seat horizontal, and a plumb-line is

dropped along the back from the seventh cervical vertebra, it will cross the spine once at or near the ninth dorsal vertebra, the fourth or fifth will be at a certain distance from the line, and this distance may be measured by callipers. If, then, the one end of the seat be slowly and gradually raised to a certain height, and this distance be again measured, it will be found to have decreased in proportion to the amount of slope. In all but severe cases we can by a considerable angle perfectly straighten the dorsal spine; yet this is not desirable, the exertion necessary to the posture being too severe, and likely as in a case related (p. 113) to produce evil results. We must content ourselves with a less amount of immediate effect, and in each case form our judgment of the desirable angle from the aggregate experience of its action in other cases. The changes in the lumbar spine must be called in counsel, and the diminution in its rotation will prove useful as an index. Before concluding all that I shall have to say upon the value of this device, it may be well to point out that its efficacy appears to me to

lie in the fact that it does not, like external force, compel a passive spine into a certain posture, but obliges the muscles themselves to straighten out the abnormal curve, and accustoms them to keep the spine straight. Another available but far less valuable posture is that known as the lateral swing; it is simply an arrangement of a broad bandage into a loop, comparable to a round towel suspended an inch or two above a couch; in this loop the patient lies in such manner that the most pronounced part of the curve lies on the bandage, the rest of the figure reposing on the couch on a lower level than the suspended portion. If this device be properly managed, it is advantageous to a certain extent; but it has many defects. It acts on a passive spine, and therefore has no influence on the muscular root of the deformity. The bandage, too, is apt to slip, it therefore requires careful watching, and thus the patient cannot sleep in it, which would otherwise be its most advantageous use.

The exercises, which are useful in this form of curvature, are only those that influence the

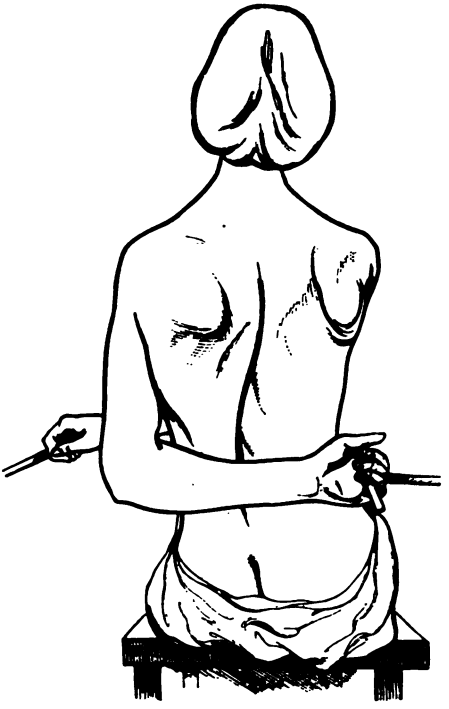
respiratory movements of the chest and abdomen. All the experiments which I have made show that such gymnastics (and many are described by authors) as affect the spinal muscles proper are futile. A point omitted for clearness' sake from the etiological history of the malady must, however, here be noticed. If the surgeon watch the respiratory movements, either by touch or sight, as may be most facile, he will, in all cases of increasing curvature, find that the abdomen is perfectly motionless even during forced breathing—in the deep breaths which he may require the patient to take, this part of the body is singularly immobile. Let him go further, and direct the patient to move the abdominal walls in and out, and he will in a large proportion of cases find that there is great difficulty in obeying his instructions. The physicians and other medical men to whom, as opportunity offered, I have, in hospital and in my consulting-room, pointed out this peculiarity, have been much struck with the phenomenon: its correction is one of the important objects in the physiological treatment of this malady. In all cases marked

by much of such immobility, any attempt to teach at once the normal, alternating action of abdominal breathing is useless; the patient must first be directed simply to draw in and throw outward the abdominal walls at any regular or irregular interval, and after a time these movements may be combined with those of the chest and diaphragm until a more normal form of breathing is acquired.

Other exercises are thus planned:—we desire to place the trunk with appendages in such posture that in respiration the right serratus shall be in a disadvantageous position, the left in the best possible position for acting with power on the ribs. And here it may be permitted me to call attention to a peculiarity of the methods which I advocate, for therein will be found to be their value. In order to keep the body upright, the erector-muscles of the spine must be called into action; but if they act upon a spine which is rotated so that they lie, not at the middle but at one side, they must of necessity bend that spine to the other side. Hence to attack these muscles as the cause of crookedness, is like blaming water

for flowing down the side of a hill; hence also that desuetude into which nearly all devices of orthopædy have fallen, and the sort of despair expressed concerning the action of those that still survive (p. 91). But if, on the other hand, we direct our attention to the torsion, and overcome that defect, then the erectors will not in contracting make the spine crooked. For this purpose, we, among other exercises, enforce certain actions of the serratus (the dorsal rotating muscle), in such wise that respiration shall affect the left ribs as much, the right as little as possible. If the patient be sufficiently strong we shall gain two objects at once, by letting her perform the exercise while seated on the sloping seat, thus. To the wall on each side of her sloping chair let hooks be fixed, and let these bear strong elastic cords terminating in handles,which she is to use in the following manner: the right arm is to cross in front of the body and hold the handle attached to the wall on the left, while the left hand passes behind the trunk and grasps the handle from the right. The amount of tension must be carefully regulated, so that it shall

not be irksome, and yet shall draw the right scapula far forwards, and the left well back.



Left Respiratory Exercise.

The accompanying figure, from a photograph of a patient nearly cured, shows the kind of posture produced. Now the patient is to be directed to make several very deep

inspirations: let them be long and slow—if possible, only six to the minute; the inspiration occupying more time than the expiration. By the different postures of the shoulder-blades the left serratus has more power than the right, and at each breath the left ribs will be chiefly used, giving a twist to the vertebræ contrary to the abnormal torsion; but if the bodily powers be feeble, one exercise—either the sloping seat or the elastic cords—will be enough at a time.

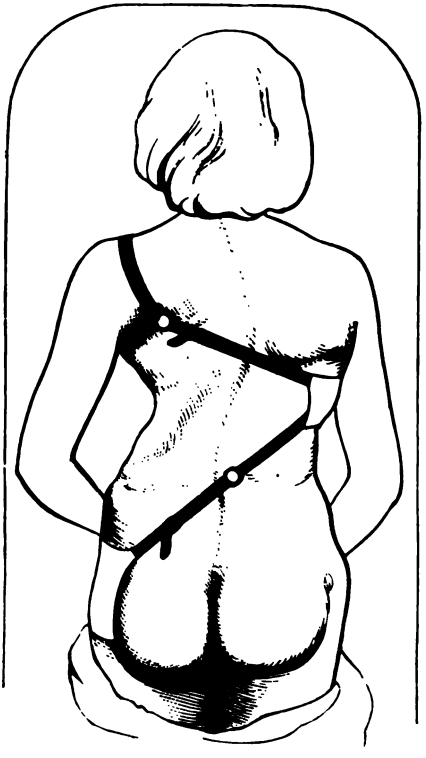
Let the patient, while sitting on the sloping seat, keep the right arm crossed well over the chest; then, taking a deep inspiration, throw back the left arm so that the hand describes part of a horizontal circle; let this be repeated three times before taking a fresh breath and re-commencing the manœuvre. After a time some weight may advantageously be placed in the left hand.

These exercises, combined with the positions at repose, and the gradually increased use of the sloping seat, will suffice for the purposes indicated; but, besides these, it is, in all but incipient cases, desirable to uphold the spine,

and to prevent retrocession of the right ribs by the oblique bandage. The principles upon which the device is founded have been already explained; it will be only necessary to repeat here that the forces are applied as nearly as possible in directions transverse to the chords of curves.

The fixed point is gained at the side of the pelvis by means of a trapezoid piece of coutil, which is held in place by a circular strap passing around the upper part of the thigh. From this pad runs, both in front and at the back, a webbing strap to another pad placed on the right over the most retrograde ribs; and from this again, over both chest and back, other straps pass to the left shoulder. The straps are rendered elastic by intercalated rings of india-rubber, and are, of course, provided with means of regulating tension. To insure clearness of illustration, the bandage has been depicted as though it were next the skin; but it is not thus used, a very simple arrangement of dress enabling the patient to wear it outside the chemise and underclothing.

One of the objects fulfilled by this apparatus—namely, lateral action on the curves of



The Oblique Bandage.
(The pad on the right is a little too much at the side.)

the spine—has been discussed. The other—namely, such forward impulse to the right

ribs as shall prevent, or aid in the cure of, rotation—is procured by difference of strength in the elastic rings before and behind, by certain checks to the elasticity of the latter, and by difference of tension regulated by the surgeon. This, with a little practice, is very easily achieved, care being taken to fix at a certain amount the difference of pressure. There are, however, some cases, chiefly those of old standing and much deformity, which require a somewhat modified bandage. Such changes are easily imagined, but I shall, when speaking of aggravated curvature, describe a form of band, devised on a rather different model.*

A certain custom or experience in the use of these different expedients will lead to a method that shall in each case develop their greatest value, and perhaps a few hints on the varying constitutions of patients affected with curvature will not be misplaced. Among

* The shoulder-sling is, in cases of weight-bearing curve, to be combined with this bandage simply by letting the point of the V-shaped strut be supported by the pad on the right side.

persons thus suffering we find all different forms of growth and constitution. The overgrown, pale, and slim young girl, whose form is popularly considered as the type and *beau idéal* for such distortion, is hardly, if at all, a more frequent victim than the strong, ruddy, and firmly built. But as the physical condition in these individuals is different, so will it be wise to make such variations in the method and time of our appliances as shall suit the particular case. The former sort will require at first only a small allowance of the exercises prescribed; the performance must be somewhat carefully watched. The use of the sloping seat also must be guarded. The same angle will affect a long spine more than a short one; but more especially it will be well to remember that weak muscles must not be over-exerted. On the other hand, the use of the bandage must at first, in the weaker spines, be more decided; and the lower pair of straps, more especially, must be made to do their work. Again, in such variety of constitutions, we shall, of course, find that medicinal treatment must vary. Some practitioners,

under the idea that all lateral distortion is a result of debility, give quinine or iron in every case; others, clinging to the notion that some disease of bone produces the disease, administer lime with the steel whenever a lateral curve makes its appearance. In practice, however, we find that among a number of people laterally distorted there shall be all varieties of general condition—robustness, anæmia, and, in fact, the only point of physical resemblance shall be the curve itself; hence, in many cases, medicine is quite unnecessary, and had better therefore be omitted; in other cases the general disturbance speaks for itself, and must be treated. The curve itself and its immediate cause are not to be benefited by medicines; but when the severity of the distortion has produced loss of health—a not uncommon circumstance—we shall find certain tonics—quinine, iron, perhaps cod-liver oil, and frequently iodine available;—that is to say, they will be of some use; but these may be administered to profusion, yet the pain and the lassitude will continue until the local treatment has improved the condition of the back,

and then such symptoms will decrease. Concerning the choice of the above medicines, little need be said. The function of menstruation is not unfrequently greatly troubled in lateral curvature; and very little experience of these cases leads one to observe, that this occurs more especially in the lumbar form of the malady. Such state will give a clue to the sort of medicinal treatment needed. Excessive languor, inedia, a shortness of breath, or a hacking cough, furnishes sufficient data for treatment in other cases; while the absence of any such symptoms will warn us to withhold medicines where they are not wanted.

Perhaps it will be remembered that a promise has been made to show how the rotation-measure, whereof I have once or twice spoken, may be used as a means of determining whether a case is improving, or the reverse. If a patient with a dorsal curvature to the right present herself for treatment, it will be found, when she is subjected to test by this instrument, that the body will turn less to the right than to the left, and the difference will be commensurate with the

severity of the curves;* hence it follows that if the patient get better the variation will decrease, and *vice versâ*. Of course I do not subject all patients presenting themselves for treatment to this test—many circumstances, besides the value of my time, would preclude such practice; nevertheless I have, in a goodly number of cases, kept a regular record of these measurements, and subjoin one or two such diaries:—

Miss C. B., aged nineteen, 1866.

	RIGHT.	LEFT.
19th February	30 deg.	40 deg.
25th April	26 „	36 „
10th June	30 „	35 „
15th August	36 „	35 „

Miss L. L., aged sixteen, 1866—1867.

	RIGHT.	LEFT.
27th July	40 deg.	70 deg.
24th August	35 „	61 „
21st September ..	40 „	60 „
19th October	50 „	59 „
16th November ..	54 „	58 „
14th January	58 „	58 „
11th February	60 „	58 „

* Very severe curves are, however, rather irregular in their indications, and backs which have been kept in steel supports have been thereby artificially stiffened; their performance can not therefore be relied on.

Miss S. C., aged seventeen, 1867.

	RIGHT.	LEFT.
6th April	25 deg.	40 deg.
„	29 „	39 „
„	32 „	38 „
„	34 „	36 „
„	38 „	37 „

A different way of measuring,—that by a silk thread stretched between the middle of the sacrum and the vertebra prominens,—may be adopted. There is, however, some difficulty in rendering such measurement very accurate, since the breadth of the spinous process is sufficient to give large margin for error, by carefully marking on the skin with ink, the inner and outer boundary of the bony prominence, and taking the centre as the point for measure; we can, however, obtain considerable exactitude in estimating lateral deviation in tolerably severe cases; but when the curvature is either slight in its commencement, or has advanced considerably towards cure, this is of very little avail. For instance:—

E. F., aged 22, came to me 15th November, 1865, with marked respiratory curvature to the right. She was a tall, rather slim girl; had of late lost health

rapidly, and got thinner; appetite bad; complains of a good deal of dull pain at and about the right shoulder-blade and arm-pit, and also about the upper part of left ilium. There is evidently something vague and unsettled about this pain, as she finds difficulty in fixing its exact locality: it decreases when she has been for some time recumbent. Measurement of the curve gave—

	5th Dorsal	$1\frac{7}{10}$	to right.	2nd Lumbar	$1\frac{3}{10}$	to left.
14th Dec., 1866.	„	$1\frac{1}{10}$	„	„	$\frac{8}{10}$	„
11th Feb.	„	$\frac{9}{10}$	„	„	$\frac{7}{10}$	„
1st March	„	$\frac{5}{10}$	„	„	$\frac{4}{10}$	„
25th April	„	$\frac{3}{10}$	„	„	$\frac{3}{10}$	„

August 15th.—There is still a perceptible, but scarcely (on the living body) a measurable distance; the line touches all the spinous processes, but does not lie over the centre of some of them.

September 27th, 1866.—The back is now perfectly straight; neither by eye nor manipulation, by measurement or the rotation test, can I find any difference.

Miss R——, aged $17\frac{1}{2}$ years was sent to me by my friend Dr. Cotton, October 12th, 1867, on account of the following conditions. During the last three or four months she having lost health, flesh, colour, and appetite, was taken to see Dr. Cotton, who found no signs of tubercle in the lung, but simply failure of vital power, he also saw upon her one of the usual steel supports that had been ordered her by one of that persuasion, and made by a practised maker. On questioning her the physician found that five months ago some apprehension had been excited by tendency to stoop, and she was taken to Mr. ——, who,

ordering the usual mechanism, had seen her frequently, to screw up the levers in the interval.

In my presence the scaffolding was removed, and I found a dorsal curvature to the right pretty strongly marked; with those particular additions which I have always observed on backs that have for a length of time been supported by a stiff instrument—namely, that on first removal the spine remains in the same attitude, with a certain rigidity; and rotation is more marked than the lateral bend. After a time, and generally of a sudden, the back gives way and sinks into very considerable curves, and then the spine becomes again more flexible. There is considerable tenderness of the spinal muscles.

The patient is suffering under a morbid irritability; she flushes very easily, and has fainted once or twice on very slight occasions. I therefore ordered no exertion from position or exercise, but simply that she should remain erect but very little at a time, until a less exacting mode of support could be made.

25th.—The bandage was applied on the 18th, and she has since sat up more, and walked about a little, she is better generally; irritability is much less; the pain and tenderness of the spinal muscles have disappeared, or nearly so.

20th November.—The back has improved each time that I have seen it (about every ten or twelve days) and now the condition is very much better; her morbid irritability is gone, and although closely watching, I have seen none of that transient flush. The tenderness of the spinal muscles has also quite disappeared. The sloping seat, rising 1½ inch to the foot, is ordered

for her, which she is to use ten minutes twice in the day.

December 18th.—Still improving.

January 23rd, 1868.—During the last few weeks this young lady's improvement has been very rapid. There is now but very little lateral deviation; the rotation, however, is to a skilled examination very evident.

March 2nd.—This case is to be considered well. The patient's back is perfectly straight; she has gained health and flesh, her spirits are good, and she can take a fair amount of exercise.

April 17th.—I saw this patient again; the back remains perfectly straight.

CHAPTER IX.

ON SEVERE AND ON SLIGHT CURVATURE.

ALTHOUGH in the foregoing chapters the promise of our title "The Causes and Treatment of Lateral Curvature" has been realised, a few words may yet be advantageously employed in some considerations on the above subjects; for, in order to preserve a certain clearness and succinctness of narrative, facts and illustrations have been taken from the typical condition—the state of medium severity—therefore the two extremes have been left nearly unnoticed.

Cases of very severe, or as we may call it, of exaggerated curvature, belong to the class of dorsal, and, I believe, always of the respiratory curves. I have never seen a case of lumbar curvature, nor of weight-bearing curve, approaching the degree of severity which I

intend to designate by the term "exaggerated curve," a degree in which not any portion of the spine, but the angles of the right ribs, rotated far back form the hump. Such distortion may, and generally does, occur in the ordinary manner, commencing slowly and insidiously, either not treated at all, or not benefited by the treatment adopted, but going on gradually and steadily increasing; or it may arise in a much more sudden manner from internal disease. Some description has been given of the different shapes and positions of curvature produced by various lung-diseases (p. 74), the short high curvature of consumption, the longer and low curve of pneumonia, &c.; but if the whole lung, or pleural cavity, be affected, then we find a condition which, as far as the spinal distortion goes, precisely corresponds to the usual curvature.* There is the same relative amount of rotation and lateral flexion,—in fact, the same posture arising from identical muscular causes.

* That is, if the lung-mischief have been to the left; if the right lung have been affected, this difference of side must be superadded.

A number of these cases have come under my notice, and if the local disease improve, it is frequently very interesting to observe, how surely the curve keeps pace with its amendment. If, however, the respiratory malady does not improve, then the spinal distortion will, like its cause, remain stationary or get worse. The degree, to which, if the lung be seriously involved, the curvature may attain, depends upon the age at which the original disease has attacked the patient. Some of the worst distortions of the spine that I have ever seen have been produced by some severe mischief, rendering a lung useless, or all but useless, at a very early age. We, then, not only find distortion from unilateral respiration, but also from want of development of the ribs on one side. I have at the present time under my care a patient, aged 22, who is suffering under exaggerated curvature arising from pleuro-pneumia and empyema, which occurred when she was seven years of age. An old scar on the left side shows where the pus was evacuated. The whole of the left lung is carnefied, her lips and conjunctivæ are dusky from

insufficient respiration, and the left side of the chest is so small that there hardly seems room for the heart. The upper ribs appear absent, so small are they, and the finger pressed under the clavicle comes against the venter of the scapula. The excessive crookedness and extreme rotation of the spine, cause the angle of the right ribs to form a prominent hump, visible even through a loose cloak.

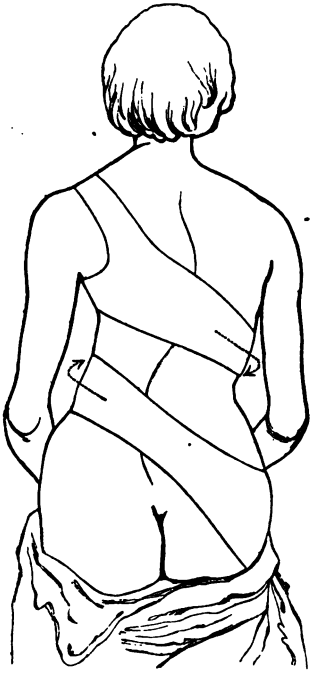
Such very severe cases are exceptional: nevertheless, we not unfrequently meet with exaggerated distortion dependent either on the usual causes or from internal disease, and although either class cannot be considered curable, a good deal may be done to alleviate the suffering induced. The patients thus affected are generally incapable of any exertion, of standing or of sitting upright beyond a few minutes, and they are subject to certain severe pains on the left (the concave) side, about the lower intercostal spaces and upper parts of the abdomen: these pains also sometimes extend lower. Their origin is somewhat obscure: the peculiar position affecting muscular conditions may have something to do with them, or again

they may result from narrowing of the intervertebral foramina.

Our object in such cases can be simply to render life less painful and burdensome; we cannot—especially if the curve result from internal origin—hold out much prospect of producing any great alteration in form. The patient should as much as possible avoid sitting with the back unsupported, and her chair should be prominent at the region of the loins, so that the whole of the figure, not merely the shoulders, are upheld; and I certainly have always found benefit from making this seat slope from left to right—benefit, that is to say, in diminishing pain. Some sort of support is also necessary, but not such a one as renders, or endeavours to render, the figure immoveable; these are, after a certain time, very frequently discarded. In many cases, and those not among the most severe, the oblique bandage (p. 148) gives all necessary support, and patients have expressed themselves greatly relieved by its adoption, but other cases of a severer form, or suffering more pain from an equal amount of distortion, find advantage

rather from a band, which gives more support over a larger surface, and which from its construction I have ventured to name "The Spiral Bandage."

The annexed plate will aid the comprehen-



The Spiral Bandage.

sion of its action. A broad, irregularly trapezoid piece of coutil is secured on the upper

part of the right thigh by a round strap (if this piece be properly shaped to the hip, it has no tendency to slip), and is continued round from the right hip to the left loin, where it overlies the most prominent part of the lumbar (secondary) curve; and then getting narrower as it passes further round, it terminates in a strong india-rubber ring over the cartilages of the false ribs. On the left shoulder another piece of coutil is secured by a loop of the same material carefully fitted to the part; from this loop the bandage passes round the right side over the most pronounced dorsal deviation, and tapering onward terminates also in a strong india-rubber ring opposite to, but a little higher than the one previously named. It now only remains to connect these two rings by suitable broad straps, with means of securing proper tension. It is plain, from this description, that when the india-rubber rings are put upon the stretch, we have forces at the most protuberant part of the back and loins acting from the outer sides towards the mesial line of the figure, tending therefore to draw these parts into the straight position.

But this is not all. The direction of the different parts of the bandage is such that the force acts *round* the prominences—acts indeed against rotation, and this power may be increased by placing a pad on the eminences under the bandage; or, as this beneath the clothing increases the appearance of distortion, by making a gather or plait at that part. The direction of the lateral and circular force is marked in the woodcut by dotted lines and arrow-heads. A few minor points, in details of arrangement, may constitute just that difference, which will render such an apparatus extremely comfortable or the reverse. For instance, a cushion in front, where the rings and connecting strap are situated, may be made of a thin leather or of padded silk. The loop at the arm causes in most patients no inconvenience, in others it produces uncomfortable pressure. In such case the discomfort may be entirely prevented by connecting the front part, where it glides under the pectoralis, with one of the india-rubber rings by means of a piece of elastic webbing.

This bandage I have found to be extremely

advantageous in relieving the pain, the liability to fatigue, the impossibility of sitting or standing upright for any length of time, and the sense of prostration such sufferers experience when obliged to go through a little more exertion than usual. Several such patients are now under my care, and although I do not intend to give cases of this far advanced distortion, a few remarks on one or two of them may be to the point:—

One lady, aged 38, has devoted nearly all the early part of her life to instruments, gymnastics, couches, &c. In 1855 she was still wearing a spinal support, sometimes during both night and day. The instrument was very fatiguing, and its wear injured her health greatly. She went to the sea-side, and remained recumbent for nearly two years; then had a lighter instrument, but found the pain continue, and her health again began to give way. During the last few years she has worn no appliance, as she says that she feels more comfortable without them. She came to me at the end of 1867, being only capable of sitting up for a few minutes, and then with

pain. Having caused a chair to be arranged after the principles given above, I then had a spiral bandage constructed. Since that time she has been able to go about a good deal more without nearly so much fatigue, and in the early part of this present May she sat out a whole oratorio without feeling over-tired.

Another lady, aged 28, came to me in June, 1866, with a strong curvature, and a severe support, in consequence of which she was suffering very considerable pain. As soon as a spiral bandage could be constructed, I let her change the one appliance for the other. Formerly, in taking a railway journey, she was obliged to have two seats, with a board, india-rubber cushions, &c., and travel horizontally, and even then suffered much. At Christmas time last year she, by tightening the spiral bandage a little, was able to travel sitting upright for nearly two hundred miles with but very little discomfort.

The few words which I would say on the subject of very slight curvatures rather relate to diagnosis than to treatment. The natural

anxiety of a mother that her daughter should grow up straight, leads many parents to take a girl to someone reputed skilled in this class of case; in order either that any desirable treatment might be adopted, or that her parental fears may be set at rest. Under such circumstances it is, of course, necessary that a correct judgment should be formed and given. In such cases the probability is that some unevenness of the two shoulders will have caused the lady's doubts, and it is upon the sort of difference in height of those parts that I would speak; for the right or the left shoulder may assume an habitual attitude a little higher than the other, and yet there may be no spinal deviation.

The scapula is very moveable; it may be temporarily lifted by the action of the trapezius and serratus to a considerable height, or it may, through some awkward trick of habit, be kept permanently above the level of the opposite side by similar muscular action; but in all these postures the dorsum of the bone will not alter its aspect; like its fellow of the opposite side, it looks backwards and a little

outwards, and but very little or not at all *upwards*. If the acromion be brought forward, the dorsum of the one bone will look more outward than that of the other. But something more than this happens when the shoulder is displaced by deeper causes. At p. 64 is given an account of the manner in which the scapula is pushed back from beneath by the retrocession of the ribs. The bone overlies the upper ribs from the second to the seventh; its lower angle just touching the one last enumerated, when the arms hang by the side. Now we know that the fifth dorsal vertebra is that which has most deviated, and the fifth rib the one that in its lever-like action recedes most. Hence it is the lower part of the scapula which is most pushed back, the upper costa being but very little, if at all, affected. The bone then becomes too horizontal, the dorsum will look too much *upwards*, and the lower angle will protrude too far back—stick out too much. This is the position which should inspire anxiety; the mere elevation of the shoulder has nothing to do with spinal curve. Even this too horizontal

position alone is not to satisfy the surgeon that curvature exists. He must also examine the relative position of ribs on both sides of the back, must ascertain if rotation have taken place (p. 60); that is to say, if the peculiar position of the scapula be produced by its being pressed backward by the ribs themselves. I have been induced to insist with a certain minuteness on these points, because, in several instances, medical men bringing me patients have been somewhat inclined to doubt my assurance that no lateral curve existed, referring again after such negation to the heightened shoulder; but all those friends have acknowledged to me that subsequent events have proved the correctness of my diagnosis.

Again, it has appeared well to lay such stress upon this subject, because it is closely connected with what may be called "hysterical spine." There is, in my experience, no mock disease so common as an hysterical simulation of dorsal malady. But in nearly every such case diagnosis is not difficult. The pain or flinching upon slight contact, the ease with which steady pressure is

borne, either absence of any rotation and curve, or presence of one simple curve, which increases while the patient knows herself watched, and disappears nearly or entirely when her attention is directed elsewhere, with other signs, are all very strongly marked, and afford a sufficient ground for undoubting diagnosis. Sometimes, however, we meet with mixed cases,—cases in which there is weakness of the spine, with slight rotation, a tendency to, rather than actual distortion, and mingled therewith a highly hysterical condition,—such a case was quite lately sent me by Dr. Theodore Davis of Clevedon; others also presenting extreme difficulty of diagnosis and of treatment, have come to my notice. They are, nevertheless, unusual. The points, however, regarding the position of the shoulder and the occurrence of hysterical complication must be well known to the surgeon examining these cases; lest he fall into the error, sometimes committed, of subjecting to long treatment a spine which is perfectly healthy.

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